QUAQSI!

Featuring

"BIRDS" redux

It will never be 1998 again

*there is none

THE BOMB WOULD NOT DIE!

Have Fun

MADE IN USA MADE IN

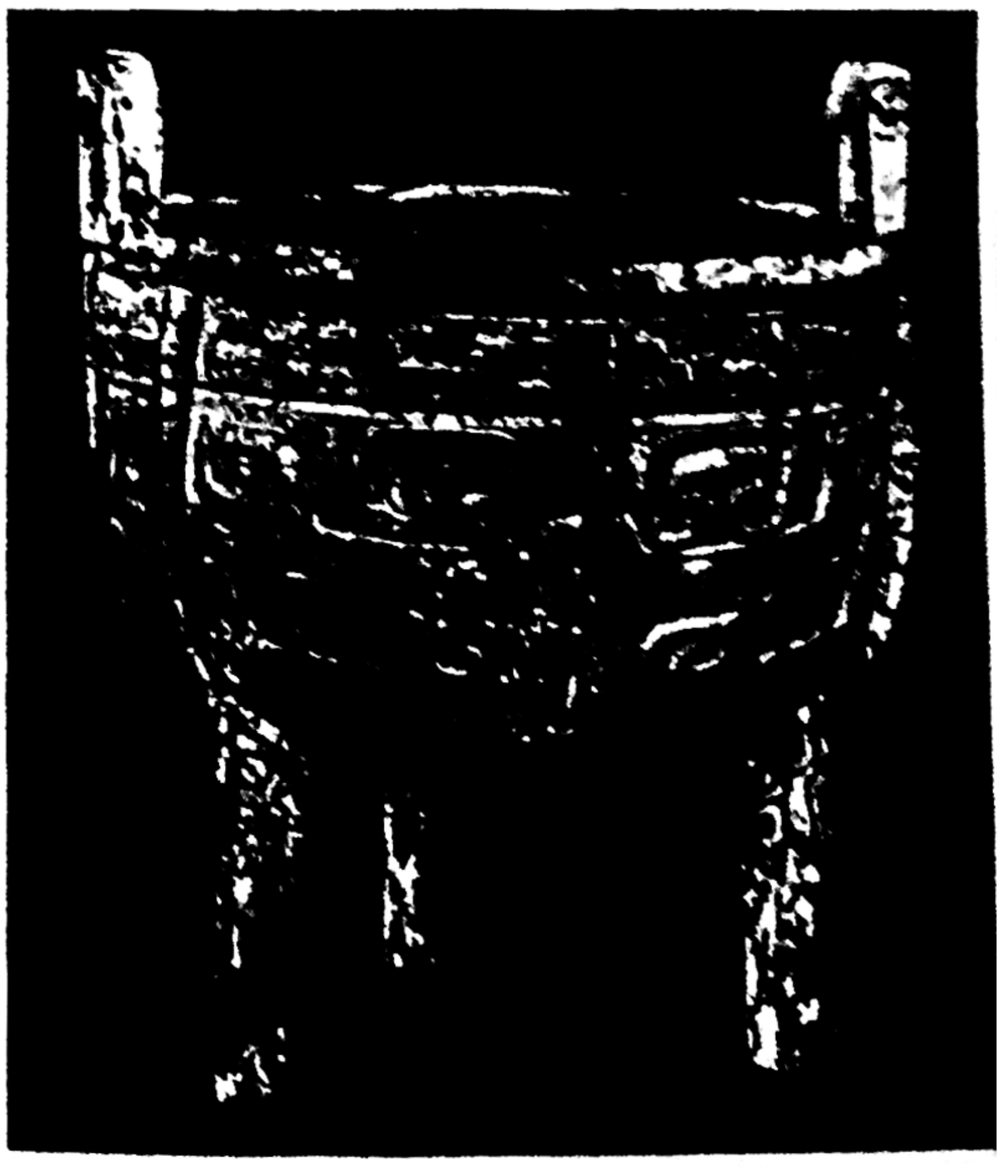
FUCK MAGA

26. *You in form of bear (?) swallowing man*. Ceremonial wine vessel; bronze, height 12 7/8". China. Shang dynasty. Sumitomo Collection, Kyoto

containing four of the ubiquitous dragon-like monsters, is repeated three times. Each mask is centered, not about the legs of the vessel, but about an intermediary flange, with the four dragons confronted, two by two, on either side of the flange. The whole design is actually a symmetrical pattern exactly duplicated on each side of the flange. On the vessel's tubular legs is the cicada, a design found many times in jade.

A word about patina may be in order at this point. The beautiful greens and blues of the Chinese bronzes are completely accidental, the product of many centuries' burial in the earth and not the intention of the artist. The colors result from various oxides produced by the action of salts in the earth. Many bronzes, coming out of the ground, look like nothing so much as large, encrusted oysters. In the old days they were laboriously cleaned by the "excavator" or the dealer. Peaches were applied to the outside, and their mild acid weakened the incrustations, which then fell off when tapped with a hammer. The process was repeated until the design began to appear. Originally, of course, the vessels were a lustrous coppery bronze or silver color, some with inlays of a black pigment-like substance.

A *gu* in the Freer Gallery embodies Shang concepts of metamorphosis beautifully (*colorplate 2, p. 50*). A tiger-like cover changes at the back into the mask of an owl with eyes, ear tufts, and beak. Modern symbol seekers would prefer the bird to be a pheasant, symbol of the sun, but it has been ornithologically identified as an owl. The back of the vessel resembles a spoon-billed bird. The artist has combined three presumably incompatible elements—an owl, some other kind of bird, and a tiger—into one functional design. The neck of the second bird provides the handle by which one tilts the vessel and pours when the cover is removed. The ground of the vessel is elaborately developed with a pattern of squared spirals, sometimes called the thunder pattern. This provides a texture against which the low relief and the large design elements stand out. The casting is extraordinary for the precision and care required to cast the small thunder-pattern motifs in intaglio (*fig. 23*). The walls of the spirals are quite perpendicular; the bottoms of the tiny channels are



27. *Ding*. Ceremonial food vessel; bronze, height 9 1/2". Shang dynasty. Seattle Art Museum

QUASI

Up Records, P.O. Box 21328, Seattle, WA 98111-3328 Phone: (206) 441-8277 Fax: (206) 443-1718

R&B Transmogrification

Pre-haircuts →

← post-haircuts

Enjoy "Birds"

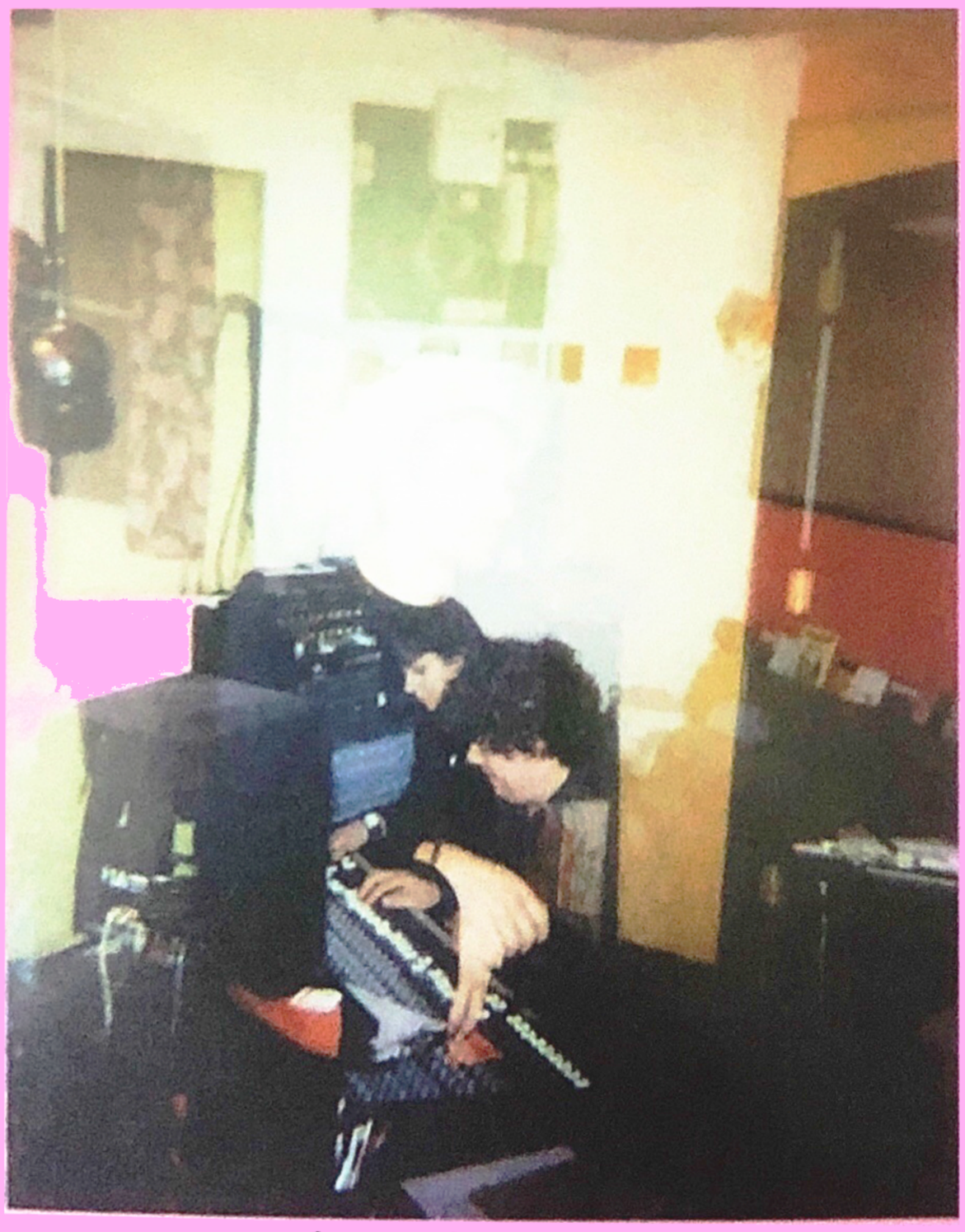
Quasi

Domino
TEL:0181 875 1390
FAX:0181 875 1391

RECORDING. FEATURING "BIRDS"

LC

SC, JW, LC



SC, JW, LC

LC, JOANNA BOLME, JW

I.C - It's weird. It's weird to still be here now. You guys are here (in Portland) just a little right before me, 30 plus years, right?
JW - Yeah lots of changes. It's...it's different...
SC - All right - so we should start in on this, since we're already going back in time...
JW - What year did we record "Featuring Birds?"
LC - I look at Wikipedia - it says in december 1997.
SC- That sounds about right, released in '98.
LC - It was pretty soon the studio opened, like maybe february '97, and I think you guys were kind of waiting to see if it sounded okay. I can't remember what recordings were before that. Maybe some of Elliot's things...I think it's funny because obviously we had the back story of when I moved to town, I came over and played a couple times with you guys.
JW- We recorded at Laundry Rules, right? Didn't we do something? Or was it Junior High?
LC - Junior High recorded there.
SC- And Moustache recorded there.
LC -Yeah, so you both did sessions. Everybody was over there. And my first session for someone else, besides Flaming Box of Ants was....I borrowed your guys' eight track and a little mixer to do the Maroons first single.
JW- With the shoe, right?
SC - I kind of ripped that idea off for this front cover, actually - it was like a shoe, a brown shoe with a blue background. And I was, like, I'll do something a little bit different, but I like the basic color, the basic idea.
JW - I think that's a good example of what it was like then with our friends. People always ask "what was it like? Was it a scene?" You kind of knew everybody, and you went to the shows and you sort of, well, imitated what you liked that they did.
SC -That was mostly what you saw, just the people in your local area.
JW -When I listened to the record this morning, I was really struck by all the borrowing that...like you and Elliot were doing, and Pond was doing. There were just a lot of melodic similarities. And not just copying - it's kind of like each person is tipping their hat to the other person.
LC - I think everybody was kind of looking for different paths forward, like, what are we doing? Punk rock happened. Then there was post punk. Then there was like, shitty hardcore. Then there's all these other kinds of musical things that passed by us, the REM-ish kind of things, and it's like well where do we go now? You can put the stuff in the blender...
SC - Well, I think, at that point in the history of the of the band, the whole idea of Quasi, I think, kind of at the beginning, was to get...we had been in Motorgoat, which was more like a psychedelic heavy rock band. But before that, my other band Donner Party was more jangly and melodic. So to get back to more pop, more melodic sort of sound, but like, just make it weirder - that was the original idea. And by the time we got here to Jackpot, the weirdness was sort of little bit left behind, but the melodic stuff was still there.
LC - I loved Donner Party. That was my first time in the studios, looking at the Donner Party reels at Greg Freeman's studio...and then, and then meeting you guys and playing a few shows together with Vomit Launch and it's like - I love those songs. And I saw Ed play up in Chico when you were playing drums.
JW - You're one of the few! The band that tried too hard, like, let's cover Jimi Hendrix and the Beatles, and we don't know how to play our instruments, but yeah we wanna cover Jimi Hendrix.
LC – Something will happen!

SC I think you did play that.
JW – Charlie s stuff is cool
SC – Charlie is the only guest star on there, because he had developed that weird technique with the slide, to get that kind of stringy sound.
LC – Its like he was playing everything backwards… I like the fact there's like 400 executive producers on this album. If you look at the credits online on certain sites, it looks hilarious because it doesn't make any sense.
SC – Everyone who had anything to do with the making of the record…
JW – Instead of thank you.
LC – there actually wasn't a lot of people coming by…it was kind of just the three of us, playing mad scientist…
JW – is that when you gave me my own fader? You gave me a fader that didn't do any thing because I was always getting up and touching the board! When you look back at this era, like at the beginning of that studio, did you feel overwhelmed? Like, oh, it was so hard, we barely had any stuff. Or do you feel like, oh, it was what a great time to be exploring?
LC – I thought it was great - I mean, the fact that in a less than a year, I did stuff with Elliott, like Miss Misery, and Joanna and I did some tracks that were on "XO." I did this record with you guys. I think the Maroons came in and did some stuff. I feel really lucky because these are people who's music I liked.
JW - You got to do music you like…
SC - Again, like all of us, pretty much, that you just named there, that was the first time that we had done something outside of a basement in a house.
JW - To us it was incredible - we get to go there, we get to go to the studio every day, just like heaven.
LC – It was such a funky space, but it really worked. I think the town needed that. John Moen said to me, right before that, he said, this town needs that - our scene needs a place that we feel comfortable working in.
JW – got us out of our basements!
SC - There were studios, but they weren't keyed into what we were doing - they were slicker, or older people, or, you know, more expensive…
LC - Smegma (Mike Lastra) was running. and he's awesome, but that's just, he kind of had his scene and bands that came to him already.
SC – Yeah, for sure. But there was definitely space for someone doing the burgeoning underground rock scene.
JW - It wasn't such a big step that we would be uncomfortable. It was just enough of a step up. It was a dedicated space, but it wasn't overwhelming, like an expensive, fancy studio with people we didn't know, which we never would have done.
SC - You knew us, we knew you, we all came out of the same scene.
LC - I based a lot of what I did off of having worked with Greg Freeman - did you (Janet) ever work with Greg?
JW – Yeah, Ed did a whole album worth of songs there.
LC - It was kind of like a special space with the roll up door, and it was kind of a ramshackle room in a way. But Greg's demeanor and attitude was so important to me because he was just really open and accepting and into that same kind of music we were all doing.
JW - We were not interested in someone, like, putting their imprint on us. We wanted it to be more collaborative, which is exactly what it was. We were all kind of learning together.
LC – Yeah, I don't think I produced it. I would never say that - I wasn't, like, in there calling shots.
SC - A band, especially a young band, can't just go in and work with just anybody, because you're not necessarily sure of your ideas. They might be great. And, if somebody's putting the kibosh on them for technical reasons or something like that, you don't have the leverage to be like "listen, man, we've made five albums, and we know what we're doing…"
JW – This happens to everyone, at every level…its not like you get to be, like, Marvin Gaye, and then people leave you alone. Theres always someone trying to squash a new idea. But when it's the person you're recording with, it's hard.
LC - because music is really conservative. I mean, it's a narrow little range of sounds that generally people kind of want to make and hear.
JW - That's why I feel like it may as well be expressive of the person, because what else is there, really? We're not getting rich, there's no fame or fortune. We have to be happy with it. And the people who understand that, like the engineers and producers who facilitate that, are the best. And those are the people that the musicians really want to work with, because all these ideas were weird at one point There's some, somebody doing everything for the first time, and you just don't need someone standing there telling you can't do it.
SC- but I think getting mad each other at each other is part of the process of making an album.
LC - We're all kind of headstrong, to some degree, in different ways.
JW - But, you would listen, and if it was good, you would just say "I was wrong," which isn't so common in a male dominated field.
LC – Well, Ive been working with women most of my career…
JW - which is another really cool thing about Jackpot.
LC - We had Joanna there right from the get go. I'd come out of Vomit Launch, which was really me and two other songwriter women…
JW - People ask me all the time, how are you treated as a woman musician? And well, in Portland, very well. Portland had plenty of women musicians and people in the studio. Spinanes were the first band I ever saw on TV,

JW - I think it's part of being young - you just have more gumption to try. And think I feel like now that I'm getting older I'm getting back to a similar thing, like nobody cares, so you can just do whatever you wanna do, really. Whereas when you're young, you're really trying to have an identity - who am I? I'm searching...who am I? What kind of music do I want to play?
LC - I think Quasi was a cool step forward, because one of the things I think that we all shared is that we liked prog rock and things that are kind of more complex, or just taking you somewhere else, you know, on a journey. And at the time you had more straight ahead rock bands, you know, Pond and Heatmiser, and Sprinkler...but then there was a band like Bugskull...
JW- the Pink Floyd influence bands. I think we touched on that with this album. Maybe not as much on this record as future records...
LC ...but there's the element of the keyboard playing. It's a little more embellished musically than people maybe were generally doing.
SC - Well, this record is specifically, I mean, it's an interesting case where we were, both you and Jackpot as a studio, and us, we were in a similar place, I think, because we had never done anything besides eight track, and this was 16! We can go nuts! So it allowed us to just be like, well, you know, we still have six tracks left- let's try something. We weren't used to having that.
We were used to really economizing and squeezing everything onto the eight.
LC - And I think also it was $250 a day for me in the studio, so it was pretty affordable, and we booked time, and we spent the time doing things that took extra time.
JW - There's lots of fun stuff on there, listening back.
LC - There's the beginning of "I Never Wan't to See You Again" that has the weird melodic figure - this guitar and piano at the top - we spent forever trying to play those because we couldn't line it up in a computer, and you you were trying to get the timing on these non-time notes, which is totally rewarding when it's done but took a while, because it just took a while.
JW - I have several very visceral memories of being in that old studio. You had the idea for the organ foot pedal bass on "Its Hard to Turn Me On". And so I was just playing it, just holding it down, and then you were synching it to the kick drum,
LC - You just send the kick drum to the gate, and you run the organ mic through that.
JW- I just can really remember sitting down there on the floor, holding down those foot pedals and thinking this is the coolest thing - I love doing this!
LC- I'd never done that before, don't know how I thought of it.
JW - I also can remember perfectly the beginning of "Nothing from Nothing," where we're just playing...
SC – its just one chord, for, like, a minute...
JW...and I remember just looking at you and just playing it, I mean, okay, like, longer? Longer? Just really not knowing how long to make it, and just thinking, well, it should definitely be longer than shorter. But I remember being in that room, looking across at Sam, doing it live. I have a terrible memory for a lot of things, but a few of these memories are really strong.
SC – Then we had "The Poisoned Well," - there was an instrumental section in the middle, and I just thought, it needs something - I think like a slide guitar, I hear that in my head but I didn't know what it was exactly, and so everybody went home. And I just slept over. I kind of hammered it out after hours and the next day I had it ready and we tracked it. But that's the
thing we had because of the the scene at that time - you're like, yeah here's the key, we're going home, keep working if you want. And, you know, you didn't charge for those hours over night...
LC – no, no, ha ha...
SC-...and the next day we came out of it with something cool, it's one of the highlights, but we had no idea going in that that's how it was gonna go.
JW - We just walked in in the morning, and you just had it totally ready, we're like, that was the easiest!
LC – You might've looked a little frazzled but you had the part! Back then, I didn't have set hours.
JW - And there wasn't even any isolation in there.
LC - No, it was just a square room.
JW - It's funny, because you listen to it and it's interesting sounding. there's cool stuff on there. And I feel like we were sort of ambitious. There's more keyboard sounds than I remembered.
SC - the original Rocksichord was still functioning at that point, but it had been broken, and I bought that Yamaha thing that we finished a tour with, right?
JW - Is that what it has? Like the harpsichord?
SC - It's a cheap plastic keyboard, I think they call them PSR.
JW – Do you still have it?
SC - I still have it.
LC - Then Sean (Croghan)'s L-102 organ was in there, the thing with the foot pedals, actually. And then I hear, obviously, the real piano - Eliott's old green piano was there.
LC- Do you (Janet) ever play the song you sing, that you wrote?
JW – I feel like maybe we've played it once. When we get to that one...I listened to it today and I was like "Oh no! What are we gonna do?" There's an acoustic solo...you must've played the solo...
SC – no, Charlie (Campbell) did that stuff...
JW – no the simple one...I might've played that. Its pretty easy.

like, people I knew on TV. That was kind of mind blowing. The first person I knew on TV was a woman. So, Portland I felt like was kind of ahead of the curve. I don't think that was the case in Seattle. Olympia, yes, but not Seattle.
LC - I mean, Joanna was there when we signed the lease, and helped name the studio.
JW - And, and I love that you give her a lot of props when you do interviews because people don't always naturally think that there's a woman in there in a technical role.
LC - Well, on "XO", she didn't get credited for Baby Britain, for tracking that, because somehow I got credited. And that's really annoying, because it could have been caught, but it just didn't.
SC - Things were moving faster in those days.
LC – They were…it was crazy.
SC - We tracked this in, like, late 97, or when was it?
LC – December '97 is what Wikipedia says…
SC – December '97, and its out in 98, like, probably in the spring, April, I think, so we could tour. It was just, like, BOOM.
JW - Now there's just such a backlog, there's so many bands putting out records.
SC - I think this record was really a breakthrough, because we had just kind of come out of this period of struggle, and I was still just trying to get my head together, and then we go in and it's like wow - it's just flowing. Everything's happening and it's cool and it hadn't been that way until we did this.
LC - Because the first two records you'd recorded yourselves on eight track…
SC - The first was a bunch of just basically experiments at home, over a period of time, that we just kind of culled together and put out. The second one we recorded in Charlie's basement. I was living there too at the time. It was basically the Pond band house.
LC – Down there on 21st…
SC – yeah, so it was still a basement recording but they had nicer gear because they had gotten some money from Sub Pop or wherever, to put into it. So it was still in the basement - in the rehearsal space of the Pond band house that we recorded the second one. But that was also probably the most difficult time, emotionally, for the band. And then by the time we got here to Jackpot, things were lightening up and it was so nice to have fun, basically, and to have some success in, you know, you play back the track and it was like "oh, that sounds good!"
LC - I know- we were lucky!
JW – But there was a certain amount of chaos…not everyone can sit with that. There's a lot of different stuff on there…listening back I was really surprised. It's all coming from the same vein, but its not really like there's just one person's vision…it feels really collaborative, which is what we want Quasi to be.
LC – I think when you're making this kind of record you've gotta be playful and open and and see what happens when you're making this. And somebody might think from listening to this that there's wasted time, or takes we threw away, but I don't think there was any wasted time.
JW – The lost take…
LC – Oh no! I can't remember what song it was. I think it's the first song…
JW – It was the perfect take!
LC - Was it the one that I recorded over it? I think it was "Our Happiness is Guaranteed."
JW – "Our Happiness is Guaranteed," with all the good drum fills…that was a good lesson.
LC - In my defense, that tape deck had no tape counter - it's crazy. So somehow I rolled back and recorded over it..
JW - And then, you know, the take that goes away, it gets bigger and bigger in your mind - "That was the perfect take – we'll never do it that good again."
LC -Well, there's a lot of things I probably did with you guys I never did again. I mean, the bad things. The good things I kept trying to emulate later.
JW – it was very early in the studio days so of course, there's gonna be a lot of mishaps.
LC - What I learned was I started just putting leader tape between songs on the two inch, because then you would just be able to see the locations.
JW - We've made record at home on a digital thing and erased the entire record.
SC – ohhh…
JW - Do you remember that? You were doing, like, a reset or something…
LC – the Roland…
SC – Yeah we had the Roland thing. And you have to get a hard drive and attach it and back up everything before you do anything, and I didn't, and it just crashed, and we lost days and days of work.
JW - But it wasn't like the whole record, because we had backed up some, but it was several days. I mean, that's just…the more you do stuff, the more…there's a lot of heartbreak that no one ever hears about.
LC - There are things that were, like I said early on, hard to accomplish just because of the analog gear because you couldn't just move or nudge it on a screen or do these crazy things you can in digital. We'd have to try to do things the hard way. But I think I, in the end, it's all pretty rewarding. Like all, there's all those, on the the intro part of "Nothing from Nothing" - all those tape punch ins on the synthesizer - all those weird startup sounds as the tape ramps up…
JW - I was kind of wondering what are those sounds?
LC - You just had the keyboard going and you just start the tape and record it's like, whhhrreww…
JW - A lot of happy accidents.

SC - I think those were intentional. That was your idea, Larry, probably.
LC - I think so. Or maybe you heard one accidentally, and you went, what's that, you know?
SC – that may be true.
LC - but that's, that's the beauty of just being open minded.. just shut up and and try things out.
Because there's a lot of things on here that are really classic, cool techniques that we kind of fell into.
JW - We must have had enough time. Some records are so rushed, you're just trying to get them done. We must have had enough time to goof around a little bit, because if we had just had five days to record and mix we wouldn't have been able to do that.
LC – no, we had more than that – I don't have my calendars from back then, but I wish I did…
I know what we spent on Field Studies. You tracked a couple songs of Phil Eck, and then we spent almost a month total on the rest of that, and that was quite extensive, but there were more difficult things to achieve on that record.
JW - We went to the church.
LC - Oh, god, we did, yeah!
JW - That was great. I still have the photos from that day.
LC - Oh my God, that room is reverberant.
JW - It sounds great – it really sounds good.
LC - All I remember is I just kept taking the Earthworks microphones for your drum overheads closer & closer, till they were tight off the cymbals, because it was just all reverb – you couldn't even hear the drums.
SC - Did you guys go up to 24 at that time?
LC -No, I think we are still 16. But that was ADAT, that song. I think we dumped it back over to the tape at the studio.
SC - Because of this leap we sort of made for this record, we thought, well, we can just keep leaping and do more production.
LC - That was good, though.
SC - I guess so. I mean, it's good to do one record that way. Ultimately, I felt like it's better to…I don't know – too much can be too much.
LC - Is it internal or external? Where do you land?
JW - we've done both. I mean, the last, the most recent record (Breaking the Balls of Hostory) is a lot less overdubs, more live playing, more vibe. But the one before that, that we did in Sam's basement, is just expansive, more tracks and sounds - just having a lot of time to toil.
LC -Either one, as long as the songs are good and the performances are good, it's, then anything's fine.
JW - I mean, I think we learned on that on Mole City, that we did in Sam's basement…I mean, the setup, it's like three mikes on the drums, just teeny little room, teeny tiny room, just filled with stuff, like Sam's cool stuff is everywhere, teetering on chairs, and cables running across everything…
SC – its about an eight by twelve room where we did the whole thing.
JW - I can barely get to the drum kit. I'm tiptoeing over things, trying not to knock stuff over. But you think it's gonna sound so drastic, and then we'd listen back and the drums sound pretty good! It's a great drum kit, and I'm just playing like I play. There's a lot of lessons that you kind of learn early, and then you intentionally forget them, and then you come back to them later.
I mean, you know, I got obsessed with the $5000 microphones and always wanting more gear and kind of feeling like that was gonna make or break the recording when, it's true, if the music isn't good, it doesn't matter.
SC - What does make or break the recording is basically the vibe - are you comfortable at the studio, and are you getting along with everybody you're working with? - engineer, producer, if there is one, whoever. It's the relations the atmosphere. That's why if you go into a strange studio that's really sort of slick and maybe a little corporate and the engineer is not on your same wavelength, and even if you have great songs, it's gonna be a challenge.
JW - because you also feel like you want to take care of the songs, you know, you get kind of defensive, like, don't ruin our thing. It's kind of nerve wracking.
LC - If you pick someone to collaborate with, it should be a conscious choice, and not just like the service industry, like, I'm going out to dinner, you know - see what I get. And I think that's one of the big lessons I've tried to impart to people in Tape Op over the years.
JW - A lot of the time, it's just financial. You can only afford certain things. But also sometimes more limitations help you, instead of hurting you. People tend to think the less limitations I have, the more options, like, the more tracks, the more gear, the more time - is gonna make it better when it's not always the case. Sometimes limitations really help you refine what you want…you can't have everything, so, what do you want now?
SC – And this album is a perfect example of that – 16 tracks…
LC – And we thought that was a lot!
SC – Yeah that was really opening shit up for us! I mean I think it would be really hard for people to imagine, if you've always just had Pro Tools, what you had to do to make the records in those days.
LC - there's bit of planning, like, you'd say I wanna double this thing, or there's gonna be solo here…
SC - You would look carefully at the track sheet - there's no vocals during this part…there's room for an overdub!
LC - Do you still have the tapes, the two inch tapes for these?
SC – I think they're up in my attic.

LC - They would have the track sheets - I wrote the track sheets for this It's funny because I was really, I mean, I've, I found Elliott stuff from before this, even, and it was all written out, and it's all pretty clear what's on all the tracks.
JW - The thing that we didn't spend a lot of time or agonize over was the drum sound. We weren't, like, moving them around in the room, and I think it sounds really good And sometimes I feel like, of course, as you progress as a musician, you wanna try different things, but it's funny that I listen to this and I'm like, that drum sound is good, it totally works for all songs, and it's good. It's a luxury to be able to change it up song to song, but you need to have a lot of time…
LC - and sometimes that doesn't - like you said earlier - sometimes that doesn't make any change
JW – We have done more elaborate recording on other albums, but everybody loves *this* record This is the record people love.
LC - I mean, that's the thing. I've learned a ton since we made this record, but if we tracked it right now and did everything the same, it wouldn't be that much different, because the intent of what these are would still have to be the way they are, in my mind.
JW - I've recorded drums with a lot of people and Featuring Birds sounds as good as anything
LC - It's an imperfect room with less than expensive mics.
JW - And it sounds like we're having a good time.
SC – We were all psyched to be there. We were weirdly optimistic about the future, which is hard to imagine now, but..
LC -Even though these songs are not always optimistic within themselves…
SC – Right - the material is not necessarily peaches and cream, but we had that vitality of, like, yes, things are getting interesting, coming together, and it's exciting.
JW - I'm not sure if I was working a day job at this point, but we were…none of us were wealthy, you know, I mean, we were all still working and doing music because we loved it.
SC - That's a great period of my life where I would quit my job, go on tour, come back, be broke, beg my landlord to let me slide on rent, hit repeat, get another job, work for a while, quit, go back on tour, come back broke again…
JW – not that dissimilar from now…I mean, it's better now We know how to tour and make a little bit of money…
SC – and I have a home to live in that I don't have to beg the landlord to not kick me out…
LC – She hasn't yet!…but I have a question. When I looked at it on Tidal a little earlier, I was amazed how short a lot of these songs are. A lot of these songs are two minutes something. And there's 16 songs. Well one is just the loops of birds, but, but there's 16 pieces on the CD, 46 minutes. Was that even a conscious decision? Or was it just like, that's just what the song is?
SC - Well, I mean, you come from the same background, we come out of punk rock, and, you know, as much as I liked Eno, for instance, and, longer stuff in those days, it sort of felt like you had to cut the fat. We come out of that mentality. And you hear the Minutemen, and its like this is the greatest song I've ever heard, and it's like 1 minute 50. Later, we started writing longer songs, and that was because we accepted and more or less mastered the challenge of writing really short, succinct songs, then it becomes a challenge to go in and write long songs. But in this, the songs are all - even like the "Nothing from Nothing," where it felt like we were playing forever, it's really just a few seconds. And the song itself after the intro is only just a few seconds.
JW - I got to "Please Do," And I was like, what is this song? I just totally forgot about that song, because we've never played it. Its cool. I like it. Is that a guitar you still have, is it that Kay guitar, or something…
SC – I got rid of it recently when we had black mold and everything was fucked. – a little Kay guitar, old, kind of like a plywood guitar, really dry sounding.
JW – it sounds great.
LC - I forgot about that song when it came on this morning. I was like, oh yeah - that's a good one.
SC - Well, I mean, again, the influences within our little scene , Elliott was playing all these elaborate acoustic things, and I was like, wow, people can do that? That's not just for old people like Leo Kotke, but like, somebody I know can play like that? Maybe I should try and do that too.
LC - What song is it? Is it "Repetition?" It's almost like "Christian Brothers"- his song, a little. without even intentionally copying…
SC I was trying to write a T Rex song.
LC - Even better ha ha ha ha. Well, we all were. That's pretty funny, but the cross, pollination is interesting.
SC - Your band mates are going to influence you one way or another. Sometimes they influence you, like, *I don't* wanna do that. With Elliott, it was a little bit of both -I wanna do that – I don't wanna do that.
JW – But the cross pollination continues to you. You're also recording all these people. Everyone was very connected
LC - And we would listen to the same records. We go to see the same bands. I'd see you at shows all the time, because we knew the people, or we liked the band or whatever.
SC - And at that stage in your life, you're really still learning your craft. So you go to a show and you're watching what everybody does, and you're like, can I steal that? Should I steal that?
I'd always be right up front, looking at people's hands. And I still do that…but now I'm very little trying to steal stuff from people. Maybe maybe once in a while.
LC – ha ha..
SC - You had a lot less awareness of stuff, without Youtube and all that. You only knew what you saw right in front

of your face, in your own town, and so you watched carefully because that was it. That's all you had.
JW – What was the burrito place in Chico?
LC – Hey Juan's – you both played there at different times, I know that…a lot of connections…
SC - But again, that's our whole trip. That's how we could be on more or less the same wavelength making this record.
LC - Yeah - I probably heard some of these songs live before you were in the studio, you know.
I remember it just being really easy to comprehend.
JW - There is a guy who has a Satyricon show, from this time He has the whole show.
SC - Wow.
JW - From this time, I think it's '97 or '98.
SC – Wow.
JW – Maybe we can do something with that…. Alright – you think that's good?
SC – yeah I think so - we got enough…you have a session coming up?
LC – No I just have a meeting…
JW – I have to take my dog to get his anal glands expressed, so you know, lets call it done!

UK CD "SINGLE"

Photo shoot for *Featuring "Birds"* at SC's former residence on Albina, aka Snipehunt house, now a tattoo parlor.

photos by John Clark

QUASI
FEATURING BIRDS (Domino)

QUASI'S SAM COOMES IS A bitter man. It's not because his former Heatmiser bandmate, Elliott Smith, is more famous than him; they're still mates and he gets a slice of the action by playing in Elliott's band along with Janet Weiss. Quasi's drummer. No, Sam is all bent out of shape for the right reasons: because life is shit and other people are bastards.

"You only hurt the one you love/That may be true/But better said, 'You only hurt the one who loves you'," he observes Mozz-ishly on The Poisoned Well, just one of many vituperative lyrical outings that make the Quasi record not only a thing of beauty, but of great bite too. Indeed, 'Featuring Birds' is an eloquent soundtrack to a tranmsitted, 20-nothing life, where marital jobs erode hope and loved ones are the source of "a thousand little cruelties we agree to pretend to ignore".

Lyrically, Coomes often seems like the flip side of Smith; the truculent cynic to Smith's battered dreamer. Their voices are even uncannily similar. But the two bands are musically distinct: Quasi's groove being largely constructed of battered organ and drumkit, with guitar and the odd violin soldered on. So Quasi career emotively between Hammond wig-outs, naked piano chords and subversive guitar pop ditties, buoyed by the vicious drumming of Weiss, the busiest drummer in alt-rock (she's also in Sleater-Kinney).

Bitter they may be; but Quasi remain inspirationally unbowed

(8)
Kitty Empire

with the body once it stops wrigglin' around. But you figure it is some sorta "you're gonna miss me" suicide The fact that the corpse is gonna be a pain to dispose not exactly a persuasive argument with which to instill Perhaps reflecting one particular feeling on one parti day, it illustrates the genius of Quasi in their ability nonchalantly retrieve witty yet stirring lyrics and evoc soundscapes from the thick air of daily living. "In The Place" is probably Sam's most simple and eloc expression of feelings we've all shared:

I used to think love 1
feels
I

Coming up with material for the current Quasi album, *R&B Transmogrification*, was probably too easy in a way, suffused as it was with great pain. Sam and Janet had ended their marriage. The divorce was a rich source of material. "It was extremely intense as you might imagine, but for whatever reason, we just decided to work through it," he told me. "I have to give her a lot of credit for trudging through a lot of difficult things... we'd write, practice and then play in front of a few hundred people while the wounds were still fresh (that nervous chortle again), and I'd be crying in front of these people because it was very fresh." I guess it was fresh. But with such an alloy of talent, how could it go stale? The Quasi machine is supple and self-lubricating. As a duo they are musically critical, constantly commenting on each other's statement; it's kinetic regeneration. They enjoy no protective cloak of a larger band image; they project none of the pretense of the charismatic soloist's infallibility. Theirs is a union of shambling, pop song mangle and noise generating prog-rock incision that envelopes the listener like a robotic PushMe-PullYou jonesing for a tune up.

"Ballad Of A Mechanical Man" is Sam's Frankenstein doppelganger. The opening joviality of the deceptively happy-go-lucky chords give way to tense chromatics. The resultant dread and acquiescence is defined by Janet's snare-less beats, which create no less an industrial paradox than a coal-fed John Henry. Like *2001: A Space Odyssey*, first the visit: "A machine came knocking at my door/Lost and alone, hungry for oil..." Then the transformation (Transmogrification): "What I see and what I think I hear/Clouds in my eyes, rust in my ears." Like *Edward Scissorhands* (kind of), beleaguered acceptance: "A machine will never have to feel/I know it's fake but pretend that it's real." Finally, the all too human chorus: "Soon we'll all be dead/It makes me feel so comfortable." Cold comfort.

In other songs, vampires prey on ghosts, a twisted cabaret illustrates fixing up "My Coffin" and in general, Sam seeks to disappear like a Shaker—noble in his simplicity, passionate in his avocation and utilitarian in his approach. All that would be left behind would be the furniture. But I don't think Janet's going to let him off that easy. Just because she's out, doesn't mean she's gone. And we're not either. True, the distorted piano is seemingly cheapened, misshapen, denatured. But the notes sung, pounded and plucked claw upwards, straining for faith and belief. The drums are not merely marking time, but tempting it, skirting it, teasing it. And I guess Sam understands. "I do work with structures, but want some room. Music is like anything else in your life. You don't want to be tied down or chained too rigidly. You want to have room to move about. It takes a certain amount of experience. The clash of structure and freedom reflects the basic problems of life in general." So, while he professes to being influenced by the radio he grew up with in the 1970s as well as the Kinks and the Meat Puppets, Fred Frith is an idol. "He's hard to beat. Like the variety of styles he comes up with, there's such a wide spectrum of music but it comes out of a central place, whether improv or pop song." And therein again lies the brilliance of Quasi. They're tight but loose, loose but tight—you know, like Zeppelin. Come on, who else today is creating such an influenced but utterly original sound, that while based on songs, allows for such generous ebb and flow, empathetic communication and precise insertion of intentional noise? Quasi belong in the proud ranks of such other misanthropic and cantankerous luminaries as Pere Ubu, Soft Boys, the Urinals and Eight Eyed Spy. And damn if I don't hear in the melodies and chords, plenty of Big Star, Move and Pink Floyd. Their first album, *Early Recordings*, is flush with vaguely Eastern Yardbird guitars yet opens with a rollicking salute to Carole King. And for all of the emotional erudition, it closes with an instrumental of Frithian romance. *R&B Transmogrification* seethes with analog synths toiling on the assembly line, tormented by the straw boss fuzz bass, surpassed by the youthful clatter of the drums. The employees are in a grudge match not to the death, but just the opposite. Sam's instruments ponder, posit and plea. Janet's beats and percussives cajole, comment and crack-wise. Never the yin sans yang. Art as production, performing with great efficiency and proficiency. For all the clatter, there is no clutter. For all the instrumental prowess, there is no ponderousness. Quasi is a happy factory, creating in an exacting exuberance, a proud if marginal music machine.

By the time Sam and I were warmed up on the phone, he confessed. "When I play I'm trying to get back to the feeling I got when music was still sorta fresh to me and I was really excited." Janet couldn't say anything because she was on tour with her other commitment, Sleater-Kinney. And while she and Sam have had plenty of musical misadventures in Portland and San Francisco with groups like The Donner Party, Heatmeiser, Junior High and Motorgoat (which begat Quasi), it seems their incredible two-headed transplant has been quite an artistic, if not commercial triumph. "We stuck with this band even when it was difficult to be around each other. We've decided that (our chemistry) is a difficult thing to come by and to stick with each other on a musical level," indeed, the great Northwest, in Mecca Normal and The Spinanes, has spawned similarly gendered and populated combos. Yet, Sam and Janet have struck upon something unique. While their unassuming music is no greater than the sum of the individuals, the whole is a product of deductive quantum psychics. Quasi may be the result of a marriage of inconvenience, but the reward is better living through weird science. **end**

the Weird Science of Quasi

photos by John Clark

by Dave Rick

songsters selling wares of great quality. None were as odd, dense and dare I say, progressive, as the Quasi presentation.

The performers: A two man (man/woman) construction crew on the job, building the house that they call home.

Their tools: A fuzzed-out electric piano and a drum set, and sometimes guitar and bass when the piano won't do.

The performance: Literally hammering out the tunes, elbows flying. The apparatus was pounced on, trounced upon—bumping into walls, and let loose to carom down odd angled stairs of songs vertically challenged. Mouths agape, testifying over the opaque pulsation of the man (woman) machine.

The response: Like I said, it was early. The room and the mood were too brightly lit.

Sam Coomes is Quasi's keyboardist, guitarist, bassist, lead singer and primary songwriter. He is a tall and lanky fellow. Unlike other rock types of similar build his posture is fine, but he still won't look you in the eye. Until he does. Then maybe he'll muster up a proclamation and follow it with an apoplectic giggle. By the time I was face to face with him and drummer Janet Weiss, the steak I scarfed down at the Old Homestead, after their set, had sobered me up but caused a great complacency and idiocy. I was mute. Sam attempted to engage me and Janet spoke with the strength and forthrightness of her drumming. However, she grew tired of waiting for my clever inquiry and was eager to dialogue with her cronies. She looked right at me and right through me. Until she didn't. I figured I'd do better on the phone. A few months later, Sam told me, "I don't read books about dying." Which ain't so weird coming from a guy who wrote "When I'm Dead," a jocular song about what to do

y hammered by the time I got to the gig. Cruising on a leaden combination of Belgian beer, pricey mpty stomach, I managed to insure that I'd have no chance of operating my mouth without my e floor. Good thing too, because having to see Quasi perform in the midst of some rock industry ongst a cavalcade of talented Up and Kill Rock Stars acrobatic bears and dancing chickens, were portend a positive vibe. Most of the crowd was a good deal my junior, perhaps more than he money changing aspects of the whole enterprise, and just certainly more hip than I. As usual, 's were herded on and off the stage like cattle. Quasi were certainly received warmly over the ir early set, but Elliott Smith was the big gun that eve, and there were other rockers and

Quasi

FAMILY TREE

THE PAST

ED[1]
- KAREN ROSE
- ERIN SCHWARTZ
- MAGGIE EMMICK-HEISEL
- JANET WEISS

DONNER PARTY[2]
- SAM COOMES
- REINHOLD JOHNSON
- MELANIE CLARIN

HARM FARM[3]
- BRAD PEDINOFF
- TOM HALLENBECK
- NOAH CHASIN
- MORGAN FICHTER

HARM FARM
- BRAD PEDINOFF
- TOM HALLENBECK
- NOAH CHASIN
- MELANIE CLARIN

MOTORGOAT[4]
- JANET WEISS
- SAM COOMES
- BRAD PEDINOFF

QUASI[5]
- JANET WEISS
- SAM COOMES
- VAR.

HEATMISER[6]
- ELLIOTT SMITH
- NEIL GUST
- TONY LASH
- BRANDT PETERSON

SLEATER-KINNEY[7]
- LARA MACFARLANE
- CORIN TUCKER
- CARRIE BROWNSTEIN

JR. HIGH[8]
- JANET WEISS
- SEAN CROGHAN
- DAN HAWTHORN
- JOANNA BOLME

HEATMISER[9]
- ELLIOTT SMITH
- SAM COOMES
- TONY LASH
- NEIL GUST

QUASI[10]
- JANET WEISS
- SAM COOMES

SLEATER-KINNEY[11]
- CORIN TUCKER
- CARRIE BROWNSTEIN
- JANET WEISS

SOLO

ELLIOTT SMITH[12]
- ELLIOTT SMITH
- SAM COOMES
- JANET WEISS

NO. 2[13]
- NEIL GUST
- PAUL PULVERENTI
- GILLY HANNER

STEPHEN MALKMUS & THE JICKS[14]
- STEPHEN MALKMUS
- MIKE CLARK
- JOANNA BOLME
- JOHN MOEN
- HEATHER LARIMER

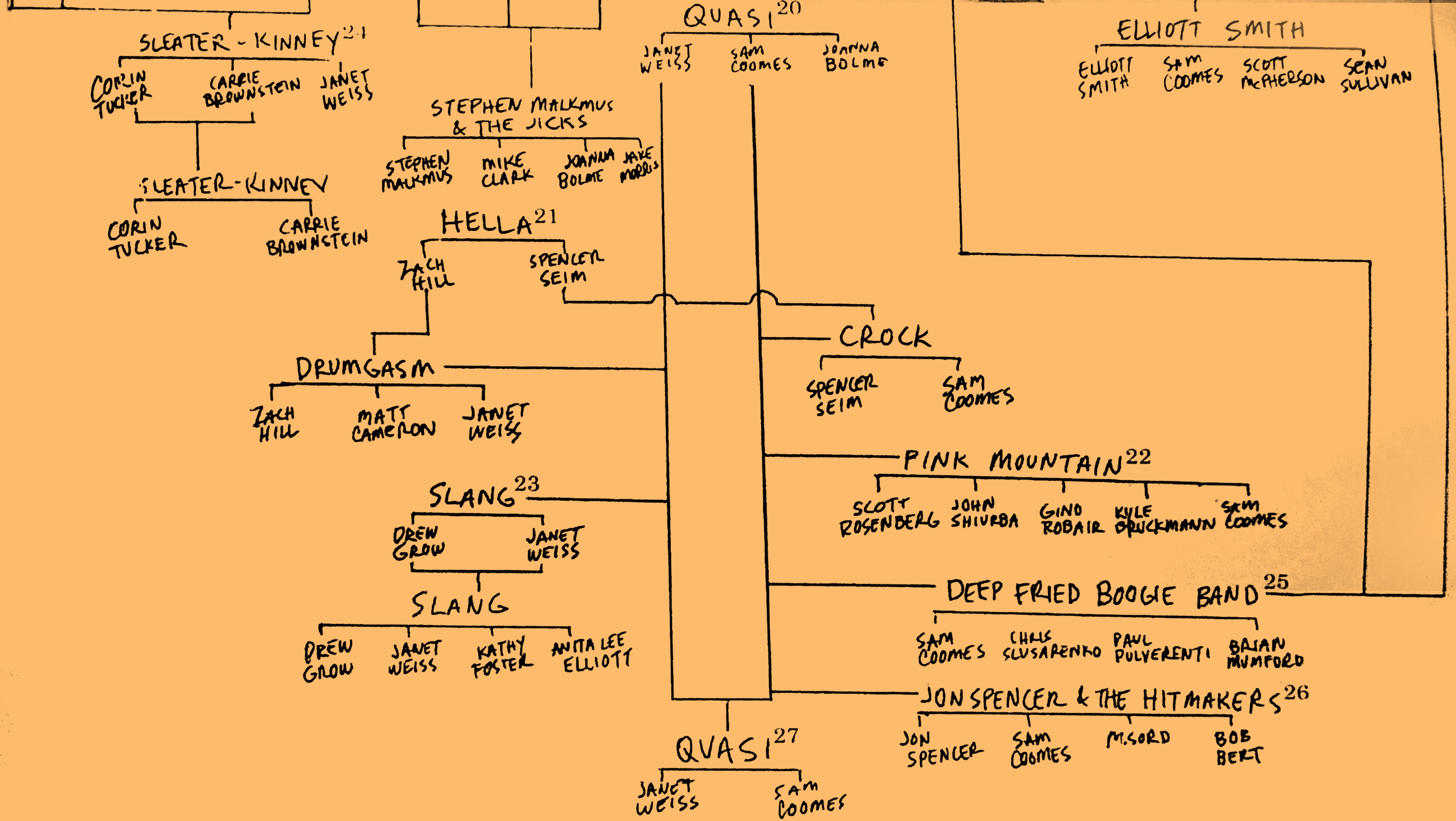
ELLIOTT SMITH[15]
- ELLIOTT SMITH
- SAM COOMES
- PAUL PULVERENTI

WILD FLAG[17]
- CARRIE BROWNSTEIN
- MARY TIMONY
- REBECCA COLE
- JANET WEISS

MOUSTACHE[18]
- SEAN CROGHAN
- SAM COOMES
- CHRIS SLUSARENKO
- NATE SLUSARENKO

STEPHEN MALKMUS & THE JICKS[16]
- STEPHEN MALKMUS
- MIKE CLARK
- JOANNA BOLME
- JANET WEISS

ELLIOTT SMITH[19]
- ELLIOTT SMITH
- SAM COOMES
- SCOTT MCPHERSON
- AARON EMBRY



General flow of time is from The Past to The Future, although spacial challenges cause temporal distortions - events that seem to occupy a similar plane in the time line didn't necessarily coincide in "real time" ... Chart is necessarily restricted to bands in which JW & SC were actual members & who actually recorded &/or toured - not solo work & not simply guesting on someone else's project.[28]

THE FUTURE

1. Ed was a San Francisco based all-female band active in the late 1980's. JW joined Ed after a stint in the Furies, which she had joined just prior to a Northwest tour that included opening slots for the Flaming Lips and The Walkabouts – having no previous experience drumming – essentially learning to play the drums on stage! Recordings were limited to self-released cassettes and a full length album recorded with Greg Freeman but never released.

2. Donner Party was SC's first band, active in San Francisco from 1984 to 1989, releasing two albums (both eponymous) and playing many shows, mostly in the region. Both albums plus additional tracks were reissued on a CD titled "Complete Recordings 1985-1987" in 2000.

3. Harm Farm was another San Francisco band active in the late 80's. When the original fiddle player left to join Camper Van Beethoven, the drummer switched to fiddle (!) and Melanie Claren from Donner Party joined as drummer. Melanie was a fairly busy drummer, playing in The Cat Heads & occasionally in Frightwig and Three Day Stubble in addition to Donner Party and Harm Farm.

4. Motorgoat formed after JW and SC moved to Portland OR in the autumn of 1989, with SC on guitar and JW on drums - luring Brad Pedinof of the recently defunct Harm Farm to play bass soon after. Motorgoat was active in Portland from 1990 to 1993, playing many local shows & releasing a couple of cassettes and one 7" single. SC and JW were also married in '90.

5. Quasi formed in 1993 after the demise of Motorgoat, as Brad Pedinof returned to San Francisco, formed his own band the Warm Wires, and changed his name to Mossman. Originally focused on semi-experimental home recordings, Quasi began playing shows with the concept that every show would be a different set of music with a different line-up of musicians. Musicians who played along with JW and SC in this period include Chris Slusarenko from Sprinkler, Charlie Campbell and Chris Brady from Pond, Sean Byrne and Brendan Bell from Bugskull, Lary Crane…and perhaps others(?). This open-ended iteration of Quasi released a cassette in '93, a split 7" single with Bugskull, and the CD "Early Recordings" in '95.

6. Heatmiser was formed in 1991 when Elliott Smith and Neil Gust moved to Portland from Amherst MA, adding a rhythm section of Tony Lash and Brandt Peterson. They released a cassette in '92, the album "Dead Air" in 93, the album "Cop and Speeder" and the EP "Yellow No.5" in '94, while playing many regional shows and touring nationally.

7. Sleater-Kinney was formed by Corin Tucker of Heavens to Betsy and Carrie Brownstein of Excuse 17 in Olympia WA in 1994, releasing their first eponymous album in '95 and the album "Call the Doctor" in '96, both with drummer Lara MacFarlane.

8. Jr. High was formed by Sean Croghan and Dan Hawthorn in Portland, adding Joanna Bolme of Calamity Jane & JW as the rhythm section. JW played simultaneously in Quasi & Jr. High and then joined Sleater-Kinney and briefly played in all three bands. Later drummers in Jr. High included John Moen and Paul Pulverenti.

9. Brandt Peterson left Heatmiser in '94 shortly before an already booked tour, which SC agreed to do in his stead. SC ended up staying with the band till their demise in '96, recording the album "Mic City Sons" that same year and doing a few additional tours, while continuing to record and perform with Quasi.

10. By around 1996 the idea of varying Quasi's lineup every single show had become impractical, and JW and SC had settled into performing as a two piece. There was already somewhat of a tradition of rock duos in the Pacific Northwest, with the Spinanes, Kicking Giant, and Mecca Normal active around that time. Perhaps not coincidentally, Quasi began to experience a little more public attention once they settled on a consistent format. A bump in the road occurred as JW & SC divorced in '96, but nonetheless they managed to record "R&B Transmogrification" in Charlie Campbell's basement in '97 and have it released on an actual record label, Up Records later that year. "Featuring "Birds"" followed in '98 and garnered much more attention than previous work, as well as international distribution through Domino records. Whether or not it could be said that this record "broke" the band, it's difficult to see how Quasi could have forged such a long path through the ever-shifting rock and roll landscape without the foothold this record provided. So – let's hear it for "Featuring "Birds!"" "Field Studies" followed in '99. Quasi changed labels to Touch & Go and released "The Sword of God" in 2001, "Hot Shit" in '03, and "When the Going Gets Dark" in '06. Extensive touring followed each of these albums, while JW and SC were simultaneously working with their other projects – busy times!

11. JW joined Sleater-Kinney in '96, replacing their drummer of a year Toni Gogin, & they released "Dig Me Out" in '97 to much acclaim. This iteration of the band released "The Hot Rock" in '99, "All Hands on the Bad One" in 2000, "One Beat" in '02, and "The Woods" in '05, with extensive touring & a continued high level of acclaim. SK went on "indefinite hiatus" in 2006.

12. After the demise of Heatmiser, a package tour of sorts was organized, with Quasi opening for Elliott and then remaining on stage as his backup band. Prior to these tours Elliott had only toured solo acoustic.

13. After the demise of Heatmiser Neil Gust formed No.2 with Paul Pulverenti of Nervous Christians and Gilly Hanner from Calamity Jane. No.2 released one album "What Does Good Luck Bring" in '99 and a second, "No Memory," with Jim Tulstra of the Dharma Bums replacing Gilly in '02. After a gap of 20 years No.2 released a third album "First Love," with Gilly back on bass in 2022.

14. Following the demise (hiatus?) of Pavement, Stephen Malkmus and the Jicks were formed in Portland in 2000. The first iteration of the band included Malkmus, Heather Larimer, Joanna Bolme, Mike Clark and John Moen. They released their self-titled debut in 2001. Two more records followed with this lineup minus Larimer. Moen was previously a member of the Dharma Bums and had filled in for Tony Lash on the final Heatmiser tour, also appearing with Elliott Smith & SC on SNL in '98.

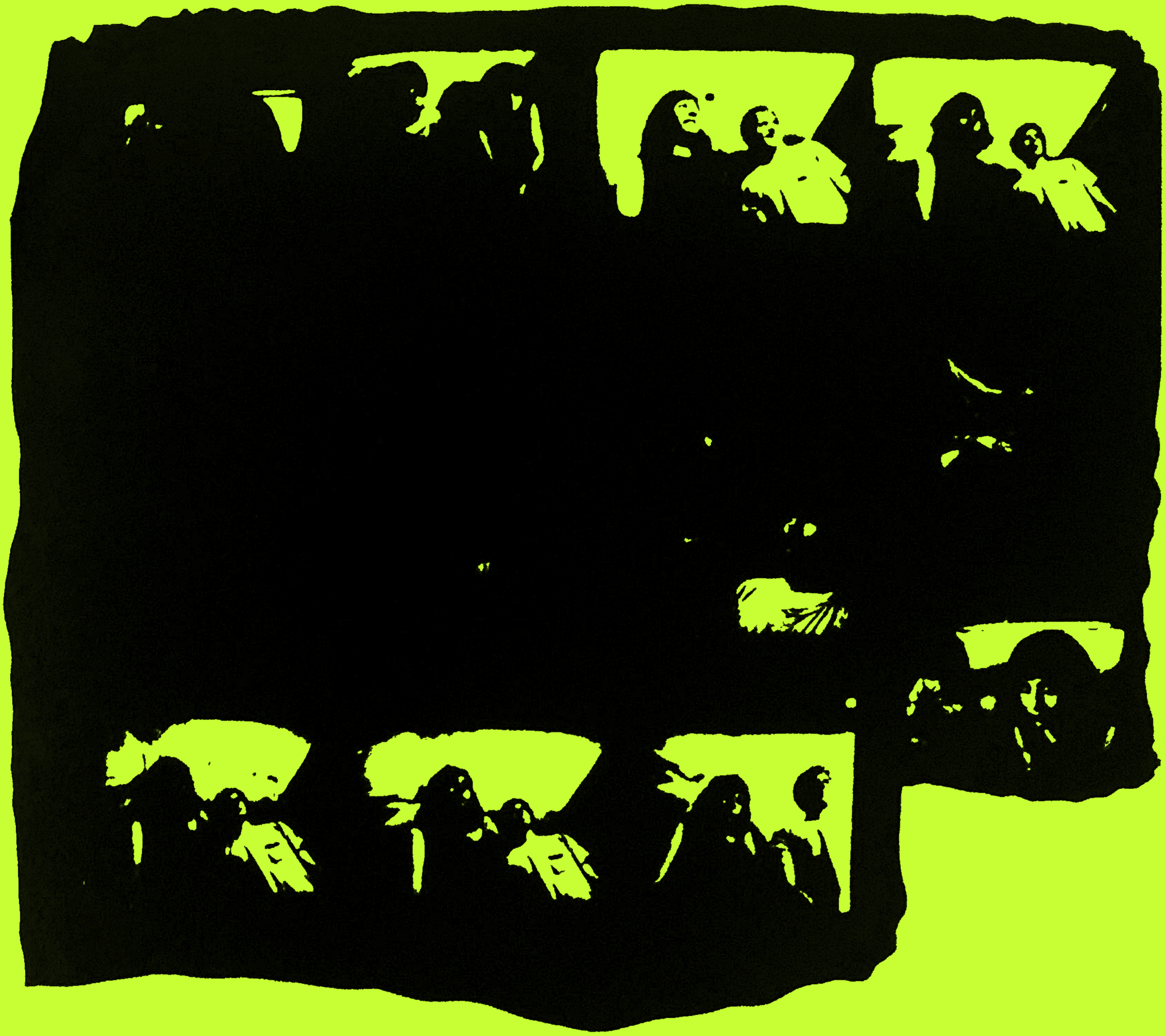
15. JW's responsibilities with Sleater-Kinney precluding her from further touring with Elliott, Paul Pulverenti stepped in, with SC still on bass. No.2 opening the ES tours at this point facilitated this swap.

16. In 2006, soon after Sleater-Kinney's hiatus announcement, John Moen left the Jicks to join the Decembrists and JW joined the Jicks on drums, touring and recording the albums "Real Emotional Trash," released in '08, and "Mirror Traffic," released in '11. In 2011 Jake Morris of the Joggers replaced JW on drums.

26. Jon Spencer & the HITmakers grew out of the sessions for Jon's first solo album after the demise (hiatus?) of the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, "Spencer Sings the Hits," released in 2018 and which featured SC on synth and M. Sord on drums. Extensive touring followed, with Jon's former bandmate in Pussy Galore Bob Bert brought in to play metal percussion. At some point the band took on the name the HITmakers, and recorded a second album, "Spencer Gets it Lit," released in 2022. Shortly before touring for that record began, M. Sord left the band, being replaced initially by JW who was in turn replaced by Andy Zammit.

27. After the tour cycle for "American Gong," Quasi trimmed back down to a duo and recorded the double LP "Mole City," released in 2013. After the tours for that record were done, Quasi downshifted for a number of years, playing only occasionally. In 2020, however, Quasi began working intensively on new keyboard heavy, or maybe heavy keyboard material, which was eventually released as "Breaking the Balls of History" in 2023, followed again by extensive touring -- back at it!

28. Partial list of such projects/collabs: JW: The Shins, The Go-Betweens, Bright Eyes, Conner Oberst, Modern Kin, Sarah Dougher...SC: Built to Spill, Jandek, Takeovers/Boston Spaceships, JD Pinkus, 2 or 3 solo albums



17. In 2010 JW, Carrie Brownstein and Rebecca Cole (The Minders) got together in Jackpot Studio to record music for a soundtrack. They asked Mary Timony to contribute vocals and Wild Flag was born. They released one eponymous album in 2011 and toured extensively 2012-2013. Wild Flag disbanded when Carrie Brownstein decided to reform Sleater-Kinney. Timony went on to form the much adored Ex Hex.

18. Hardcore band/performance art project Moustache was active on and off from '97 till an onstage implosion while opening for the Jicks in '05. They recorded 12 songs in Larry Crane's basement in '97 which were finally released on a 12" in 2023.

19. After the round of touring with No.2 ended, Elliott put a new touring band together with LA based musicians Scott McPherson and Aaron Embry, since he himself was now living in LA, with SC continuing on bass. After extensive touring, Embry was replaced by Sean Sullivan in the final iteration of Elliott Smith's tour band, active through 2000.

20. The recording or "When the Going Gets Dark," released in 2006, featured numerous bass overdubs, so Joanna Bolme of the Jicks was recruited to play bass on the tours for that album. She stayed in Quasi for the recording of "American Gong," released in 2010, and for the tours in support of that album.

21. Hella was formed in Grass Valley CA in 2001, & toured with Quasi in 2004, becoming friends and forging a musical relationship, as both bands often joined together onstage for the night's finale. Eventually this led SC and Hella guitarist Spencer Seim to form the project band Crock, releasing an album, "Grok" in 2011. JW and Hella drummer Zack Hill joined with Soundgarden/Pearl Jam etc. drummer Matt Cameron for their own project "Drumgasm," releasing an album in 2013, around the time Zach was starting the experimental rap group Deathgrips.

22. In 2004 Scott Rosenberg recruited SC for a project which would become the experimental heavy prog band Pink Mountain (in an unfortunate coincidence the Canadian band Pink Mountaintops, a very different band, released their first album in 2004, when Pink Mountain's first album was already in the can…), which released one eponymous album in 2005 another eponymous double LP epic in 2009, with some limited touring in between. (On a side note, JW's early band Ed used to rehearse in Pink Mountain guitarist John Shiurba's basement in Oakland CA in the late 1980's.)

23. JW and Drew Grow from Drew Grow & the Pastor's Wives formed Slang in 2013, and released a CDr of cover songs as a two-piece that same year. Slang eventually refocused on original material & released the album "Cockroach in a Ghost Town" in 2022, with SC, Mary Timony and Stephen Malkmus adding overdubs to the record. The Slang lineup eventually expanded to include Kathy Foster from The Thermals and Anita Lee Elliott who play on several album tracks and tour.

24. Sleater-Kinney reformed in 2014 and released the album "No Cities to Love" in 2015, followed by extensive touring. They released "Live In Paris" in 2017, and recorded the album "The Center Won't Hold" in Los Angeles in 2018. JW quit just before it was released in 2019 citing her role no longer as a musical equal as the primary reason. Sleater-Kinney has since continued with hired auxiliary players and no permanent drummer since.

25. Experimental blues-rock band Deep Fried Boogie Band was formed by SC in 2012 and performed a handful of shows, releasing a couple 7" singles and a compilation track before fizzling out in 2014.

The best deals are always the ones you aren't looking for. I've found some of my favorite records crammed in boxes on the floor of the semiannual WFMU record swaps, laid out on blankets on 125th Street or Second Avenue, or tied in bundles next to the recycling on the curb. Of course, when you need a particular item to stuff a stocking, you have to pay the piper. In a town awash in unwanted promo copies, these with nimble fingers, no dust allergies, and plenty of time to waste can at least choose the piper. Herewith, the going rates as of Black Friday for some of this year's holiday hotcakes at a few select locations downtown. Prices are the lowest we could find for CDs (in many cases, the same item could be had for different prices at the same location).

—JOSH GOLDFEIN

	ST. MARKS SOUNDS *10 & 20 St. Marks Place*	HORSE HIM'S *8 St. Marks Place*	DISC-O-RAMA *186 & 146 W. 4th St*	I&R MUSIC WORLD *23 Park Row*	VIRGIN MEGASTORE *52 E. 14th St*
Bad Boy's Greatest Hits Volume 1	$8.99	$8.99	$6.47	$15.99	$17.99
Beck, *Mutations*	$8.99	$16.99	n/a	$11.99	$13.99
Built to Spill, *The Big Wig With the Arab Strap*	$9.99	$13.99	n/a	$13.99	$16.99
Black Star, *Mos Def & Talib Kweli Are Black Star*	$11.99	$11.99	n/a	$13.99	$16.99
James Brown, *Say It Live and Loud*	$8.99	$16.99	n/a	$14.99	$17.99
Fatboy Slim, *You've Come a Long Way, Baby*	$8.99	$15.99	$9.99	$11.99	$13.99
Pit Viposky, *Is This Electro?*	$11.99	$9.99	n/a	$14.99	$13.99
Lauryn Hill, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*	$12.99	$16.99	$10.99	$13.99	$13.99
Mase, *Harlem World Leader*	$9.99	$8.99	$9.99	$14.99	$16.99
Method Man, *Tical 2000: Judgement Day*	$12.99	$16.99	n/a	$12.99	$13.99
Mundo Monstruoso, *Supersonic Forever Intoxication Junkie*	$11.99	n/a	$10.99	$12.99	$13.99
Quasi, *Featuring "Birds"*	$11.99	$12.99	n/a	$11.99	n/a
Soundtrack, *Velvet Goldmine*	$12.99	$15.99	n/a	$14.99	$13.99
Lucinda Williams, *Car Wheels on a Gravel Road*	$12.99	n/a	$9.99	$11.99	$17.99

SOUNDS RUMMAGE ITEMS **SOUNDS:** Yum Yum, *Dan Loves Patti* CD, 88 cents; Walter Salas-Humara, *Lagartija* LP, $1.99; Babylon Dance Band LP, $2.99 **HIM'S:** Laura Nyro, *New York Tendaberry* LP, $1; Ray Charles, *Modern Sounds in Country & Western Music* LP, $1 **DISC-O-RAMA:** Lakeside, "Fantastic Voyage" 12", $3.99; Prince Paul, *Psychoanalysis (What Is It?)* CD, $2.75 **I&R:** Little Louis and Marc Anthony, *When the Night Is Over* CD, $1.99 **VIRGIN:** Chocolate croissant, $2.09

...ds (still!) ...is so sim- ...bands who ...n, Nirvana, ...If you suck, ...earl Jam song. ...ver-sing. Sub- ...it they didn't

...r Seed. I imag- ...narching-band ...on E. Houston ...ese kids hang on ...nguish and sacri- ...emands, and keep ...improve over the ...really great third-wave ...part is that they seemed ...t bother.

ADAM HEIMLICH

QUASI
June 5
Acme Underground

We're rooting hard against the Bulls, Jane and I, comfortably ensconced at Acme's bar well before showtime, eating po'boys and watching the pregame show. Soon the restaurant will be full of dedicated indie rockers killing time before the concert and just-off-work-at-8-p.m. types in for a late happy hour, who'll stay till the end of the game if they're not married. Count us somewhere in between, or both. I hang out long enough to see that Jordan's on, Malone is not, and start thinking about my hosts. A local publicity firm put me on the guest list, and they're working the opening act, Creeper Lagoon. It'd be rude to skip their set. Jane is still pulling for Stockton and Malone to get their pick-and-roll together.

I leave her to fend for herself among the stockbrokers, and get downstairs just in time to confirm my worst suspicions about Creeper Lagoon. A whole lot of people break for the door as soon as they're through—seems I wasn't the only one target-marketed for that guest list. Most of those hanging around for Quasi look like serious record collectors. You sort of have to be to pick up on a West Coast band on a tiny Seattle label, no matter how good their albums are. Quasi's rock-press claim-to-fame is that their drummer is also in Sleater-Kinney. Still, there are even fewer cute girls in attendance than there would be at a Matador band's show. The guys don't look any better—I'd noticed a number of them skulking around upstairs, scowling at the enthusiastic basketball crowd. Now these guys have notebooks out. Don't forget to write down that the drummer's also in Sleater-Kinney, geek.

Quasi is very strong from the get. That drummer, Janet Weiss, plays hard and busy—she has much more room to maneuver in Quasi's songs than in those of her Ramones-influenced other band. Every time she digs in for a fill it sounds like she's kicking her kit down a staircase. The only other member of Quasi is Weiss' ex-husband, Sam Coomes. His instrument of choice is a Roxichord—a crazy electric harpsichord from the pre-synth era. Its sound is sharp and buzzing, almost like a piano run through a guitar amp. Double percussion mitigates the fact that Coomes' songs are pretty soft. He definitely loves the late British invasion sound—Kinks, early Floyd—but on piano he'd come out all McCartney.

Coomes is an excellent lyricist, and his best self-deprecating witticisms earn appreciative guffaws from the nerdy audience. A lot of his songs are about love gone bad, but the way these two interact musically—whether harmonizing easily or banging the hell out of one of Coomes' sturdy structures—suggests otherwise. They're both set up at the front of the stage, at 45-degree angles facing each other and the crowd. Interesting choice—they can watch each other, but don't have to. Coomes often bugs his eyes out and stares into space when he sings. Weiss looks happier and more animated—she can bounce all around while keeping her head perfectly still, in that uncanny way of all singing drummers. When they address the crowd between songs, we hear that Coomes' speaking voice is pitched higher than the tones he sings; with Weiss it's the other way around.

He's the sweetheart. She's the badass.

That clear, it's impossible to not assume that she dumped his depressive ass, and that Quasi is going to last exactly as long as it takes for her to find a new lover. I look for signs of this drama, but find none. When Coomes sings the lines: "You only hurt the one you love/That may be true/But better said/You only hurt the one who loves you," I look for him to shoot a glance Weiss' way. He does, but it's just for the cue to change tempos. Maybe they've got some kind of ultramodern, West Coast-style relationship that's beyond my comprehension.

About 15 minutes into the set the two of them stop playing mid-song, in perfect unison, both suddenly fed up with a mysterious noise in one of the onstage monitors. When it's fixed they're back to business with a toot-tooting melody halfway between a trapeze-act calliope number and the intro to "Sexy Sadie." Jane rejoins me just then, and lets me know that the Bulls are on another tear. She hears how good Quasi sounds and says she's glad she didn't wait until the Jazz got completely flattened.

HEIMLICH

We Encourage Special Orders
10% OFF ALL CD'S with this Ad.
OZ
RDS
MOM

QUASI
FEATURING BIRDS
(Domino)

THOSE who saw Elliott Smith's recent shows at either Reading or London Dingwalls will already know all about Quasi. They were the duo giving his admittedly wonderful acoustic shows of earlier in the summer a kick-start with some plugged-in electric action.

Hailing from Portland, Oregon, (home of Smith, film-maker Gus Van Sant etc), and boasting one Sam Coombes, who was in Heatmeiser with Elliott, Quasi dish up the kind of garage pop which makes you wish you were in a band, too. From the opening grin of "Our Happiness Is Guaranteed" to the gentle bounce of closer "Only Success Can Fail Me Now" via the deliciously nodding "Tomorrow You'll Hide", Sam and cutest-drummer-in-the-world Janet Weiss, weave a delightful basket of breezy, east coast rock.

The scrunchy guitars, boy/girl vocal melody and 100-mile-an-hour drum rolls mangle themselves with a sense of humour so dry it's been declared a drought area and the whole thing unfurls into a record which befits the image of a band ripping it out under an open garage door. For, like, fun.

If the charm and melody of Elliott Smith with a lot more noise appeals, this is an essential addition to your pile.

NEIL MASON

★★★½☆

'Featuring Birds' is out on September 28

Also this week

Quasi

(Acme Underground, Fri 5) Quasi is a duo made up of Sleater-Kinney's Janet Weiss and Sam Coomes, who was in Heatmiser with Grammy nominee Elliott Smith. If that's not enough to pack this small room, the fact that Quasi has put out two super amazing pop albums in the past two years should further shove 'em in.

Jon Spencer Blues Explosion + James "Blood" Ulmer's Blues Experience + Afrika Bambaataa

(Hudson Tent, Fri 5) Hip-hop elder Afrika Bambaataa should stalk the stage with authority whether or not he chooses to favor the throng with the proto-bass masterpiece "Planet Rock." James "Blood" Ulmer's Experience will take the blues into a John Lee Hooker/Sonny Sharrock avant-hyperspace. And the Blues Explosion will rip-roar all over the place, lest they look like dabblers in the wake of two towering figures.

Roy Loney & the Bitter Hearts + The Fleshtones

(Acme Underground, Sat 6) If you haven't had your brain blown by the Fleshtones lately, you're overdue. What's most intriguing about this bill, though, is that Roy Loney, the mastermind of San Francisco's Flamin' Groovies, will make a rare appearance. He's backed by an all-star band of locals (including the Waltresses' savant Chris Butler on the drums) and will play the songs from the Groovies' classic *Teenage Head* from top to bottom. Raise a glass or shake yo' ass to "Shake Some Action."

N'Dea Davenport

(Shine, Mon 8) Davenport is the sultry woman who used to front the Brand New Heavies as well as the guest vocalist on albums too numerous to mention. Now she's taking a much-deserved shot at a solo career, and tonight is one of her first stabs at making that dream come true.

Abbey Lincoln & Her Trio

(Blue Note, Tue 9–Sun 14) The swing era had Billie Holiday, and we have Abbey Lincoln, a singer whose timing and timbre can give both sad and upbeat songs the appropriate realness and sensitivity. And she's been known to pen a few fine lyrics of her own, too.

MELODY Maker

Conjugal Visit

VOICE

Quasi
Featuring "Birds"
Up
Under Acme
June 5

BY ERIC WEISBARD

Quasi can play with your ears. Sam Coomes has a '70s electric keyboard that he says he bought for $50; it's called a Roxichord, short for rocking harpsichord, and he's wont to rub his body all over it. Makes it dance with an unpredictable veer, creating an organ-grinder version of the "What'd I Say" jam. Wrapped inside those Pan pipes, a rock covered by paper, is Janet Weiss' showy drum rolls, breaks, waltzes and oompah, surge-aheads, stop! This band worries around like whiskey out the flask with cotton-candy chasers—grab flesh to stay standing. Then Coomes imposes his reedy, thin, high-to-falsetto philosophizing on the proceedings, insisting his melancholy be invited to the party. That detached verbosity has a timbre of its own. Quasi can play with your mind.

What was that chord again?

A decade back, he led the Bay Area's Donner Party, who put out two albums, one on Camper Van Beethoven's label with homey punk sounds and lyrics about getting lost in Hoboken and life's little ups and downs. He was morbid even then: the other album has a song called "When You Die Your Eyes Pop Out." Next we know, he's in Portland married to Weiss, these days Sleater-Kinney's drummer. For all the talk about rock domesticity—Kim and Thurston, Ira and Georgia—Coomes and Weiss are from an equally rich tradition where leaving the bed doesn't mean breaking up the band. Think Jon Langford and Sally Timms. Corin Tucker and Carrie Brownstein. Savor the tension. There's a lumpy self-released CD, *Early Recordings*, documenting Quasi's conjugal demos. Divorce in '95 focused Coomes, both musically—after this band and Tori Amos's *Boys for Pele*, the harpsichord is the official instrument of romantic revenge—and lyrically. Weiss drives home his barbs, even when they're aimed at her: "I Never Want To See You Again," "The Poisoned Well," "Nothing From Nothing."

Maybe she's indulgent because the dammit-Janet sequences are just part of the general misanthropy, like Coomes's own jocularly suicidal self-loathing, or because they're such quality barbs, honed to read off the page, the same way Coomes takes care "beveling the edges" of, uh huh, "My Coffin." He can outdo Stephin Merritt for dark chuckles: "Life is dull/ life is gray:/At its best it's just OK./But I'm happy to report/Life is also short." Only then he can rejoin the world, the same song continues "So I find myself back in California/I'm a coolie for the tourists,/those happy Epicureans./Evil spectres from my own suburban upbringing." (Who else punctuates their lyrics in such detail?) Only *then* he can just as precisely invent his own biosphere: the new album's opening cut starts off "Orbiting pods, underwater domes./We fill our tanks with oxygen to step outside our homes./Once it was hard, now it's just routine./And I can't tell the difference between people and machine." Who else writes parallel nonrhyming lines that scan metrically?

Coomes is a man who's found room to indulge his compulsions: *Featuring "Birds"* is the third Quasi album with a birds track and he's equally preoccupied with boats and robots. Indeed, despite his recent preoccupation with the "prole" theme, there's a reason why Quasi, along with, let's see, Built To Spill, Modest Mouse, Sleater-Kinney, Silkworm, Harvey Danger (whose "Flagpole Sitta" is the modern-rock oasis of the season), and throw in the Fastbacks, all contribute to what the Young Fresh Fellows once called the Fabulous Sounds of the Pacific Northwest. It may be the only part of America left where bohemian failure remains kind of romantic—fun, even, like the consequent grumbling. And this is reflected in the indie-trad rock and roll it seems to be the only part of America left producing, let alone revitalizing. Absolute mastery isn't required here—the way Sonic Youth, Pavement, or Yo La Tengo have had to push themselves in the confines of New York. Just unique individuals with musicality and free time rubbing sticks together.

That doesn't always lead to songs, of course, though organic musical interplay, writerly prose, and intriguing personalities can make a hell of a substitute. Quasi's previous album, *R&B Transmogrification*, written in the full flush of grief and despair, folded no standards-in-the-making into its obsessively restated themes. *Featuring "Birds"* hungers more in that direction, achieving one classic, "It's Hard To Turn Me On" (as in "You turn me on and . . . "), the finest indie ode to love—that's indie love, meaning an emotional laxative—since Chris Knox's "Not Given Lightly." Dedicated cranks that they remain, Coomes and Weiss chose not to perform it when they rolled into Under Acme last Friday, part of a national tour (the two of them alone in a van?) that includes some dates backing their buddy Elliott Smith.

But the omission hardly mattered. We were there to see them cohabit, and the revelation was that most of the voyeurism felt musical, not personal. Alone onstage, without the overdubs that finish out the albums, they shadow-fucked eight to the bar, Coomes scrunching to remember the weird chords he'd designed, celebrating by butt jamming on his long-suffering Roxi, picking up his Fender for a three-song stretch, as Weiss played with a jazzy liberality Sleater-Kinney can't permit her, smiling more at the musical digressions she and Coomes were taking than at his tortured ad infinitums. Free to be you and me. V

Quasi plays June 13 at Brownies.

LILLITH FAIR, FROM PAGE 31

whose face scrunched with emotion as she sang pretty, boiling lyrics in the vein of Tori Amos; McKinley's vocal style and cool, jazzy phrasing made her more interesting to watch than many others playing that night. Still, it would have been nice to see an assured talent like the Spinanes' Rebecca Gates or the coltish Miss Red Flowers step up to the mic, but neither of these acclaimed local artists were among the competitors. Even Quasi, who despite being fronted by a man has equal creative input and showmanship from drummer/ co-vocalist Janet Weiss, should have been considered for this event. Leaving vital acts that feature equal collaboration between men and women—think Sonic Youth, fer Chrissakes—out of the running is wrong-headed and misguided: Irritating and insulting, if you ask me. ■

Quasi Feels Your Pain

Work Blues

by Kristy Ojala

Quasi: Hilariously macabre.

SINCE THE TIME of wandering minstrels, people have used music to explain feelings they can't express in normal conversation, to hear their life stories glamorized by strings and harmonies. When it comes to love troubles, you can't beat American pop as a master reference library. But beyond the almighty issues of love and death lies a club-footed demon the genre mentions all too infrequently: work. Exhausted laborers and jobless Joes alike could skim through dozens of amour-heavy albums before hearing Beck admit, "I lost my job at the Hut/ my ass got cut," or Possum Dixon wearily opine, "I hate work/ I'm a mailroom clerk."

Quasi
with Violent Green, Sick Boss, Toy Train
the Breakroom, Sat May 9

Across the Atlantic, it's hard to find a songwriter who doesn't project the toll of toiling. Billy Bragg and his guitar oozed the virtues of socialism. The Beatles jokingly pummeled factory life over and over. Pulp songs constantly remind the blue-bloods that they'll never understand the plight of the commoners. Who can stateside citizens depend upon to produce a soundtrack for a morning commute to a cubicle, assembly line, or cash register?

On the third release by Portland duo Quasi, *Featuring "Birds"* (Up Records), the song titles alone suggest the soundtrack to an endless stretch of eight-hour segments: "The Happy Prole," "I Give Up," and "Ape Self Prevails in Me Still." On the hi-fi, each track presents giddy bleats from Sam Coomes' relic Roxichord electric harpsi-

Live Preview

chord, and the steady percussion of Janet Weiss, whose beats are often akin to a stream of witty obscenities. It is, however, the biting delivery of the lines that make this an astonishing—and rare—pop offering.

Coomes tremulously offers up lyrics like "Pay your rent, pay your bills, pay the doctor for your pills/ So you can work another day, as life slips away," in "The Happy Prole," but miraculously avoids sounding like a righteous activist. Instead he sounds like a born singer of the easy melody. When Weiss jumps into a chorus with her plaintive backing vocals—you could almost drown out the hilariously macabre words and believe you were shimmying to a truly happy band's creation.

Recorded late last year, most of the songs are fetching attention just as Coomes is shifting his focus to new material. "The work-oriented songs on the record are actually older songs, from when I worked at Kinko's over a three-year period," says Coomes. "It definitely was a source of those kinds of ideas, watching the company tighten up and clamp down on workers such as myself."

The songwriter is somewhat of a modern-day Sisyphus, dutifully pushing one heavy subject after another up a hill until it inevitably rolls back upon him. During his earlier life with the Donner Party and Heatmiser, Coomes dwelled primarily on the technical aspects of death and the human body as an unimportant vessel. Quasi's last release, *R & B Transmogrification*, was a painful explanation of his disintegrated marriage to Weiss.

What makes *"Birds"* stand out is Coomes' ability to conquer past obsessions and still find something equally traumatic to address. "You find yourself only writing songs like, 'Me, I feel bad, I feel this, I did this,' and it gets really old," he explains. "It's good to write honest songs in the first person, but when everything is from that angle...." He drifts off mid-sentence, then sums up the desire to consciously deal with other life experiences. "I thought it would be better to not keep writing those songs, just start looking at the thing from a distant perspective."

"Birds" does have a smattering of love-gone-wrong tracks, such as the sassy "You Fucked Yourself," but they're still somehow hinged to the omnipresent employment theme. In the swaying "It's Hard to Turn Me On," the pillow talk reveals a distracted narrator: "Mornings I tell you what I dreamed/ Before we're swallowed by the work machine." Weiss' light touch coos along, "Spit out in the evening, drained half dry/ and that is why you turn me on and it's hard to turn me on."

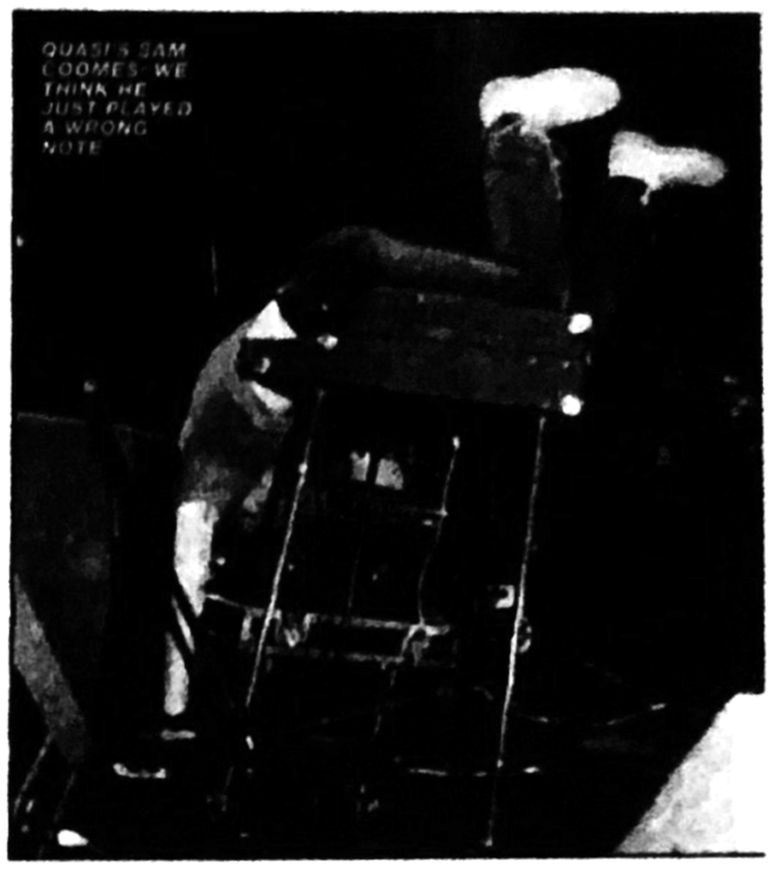
"There's not much of a tradition in pop music of dealing with these social issues," ventures Coomes. "The perennial themes are love and death. It'll eventually devolve back to that."

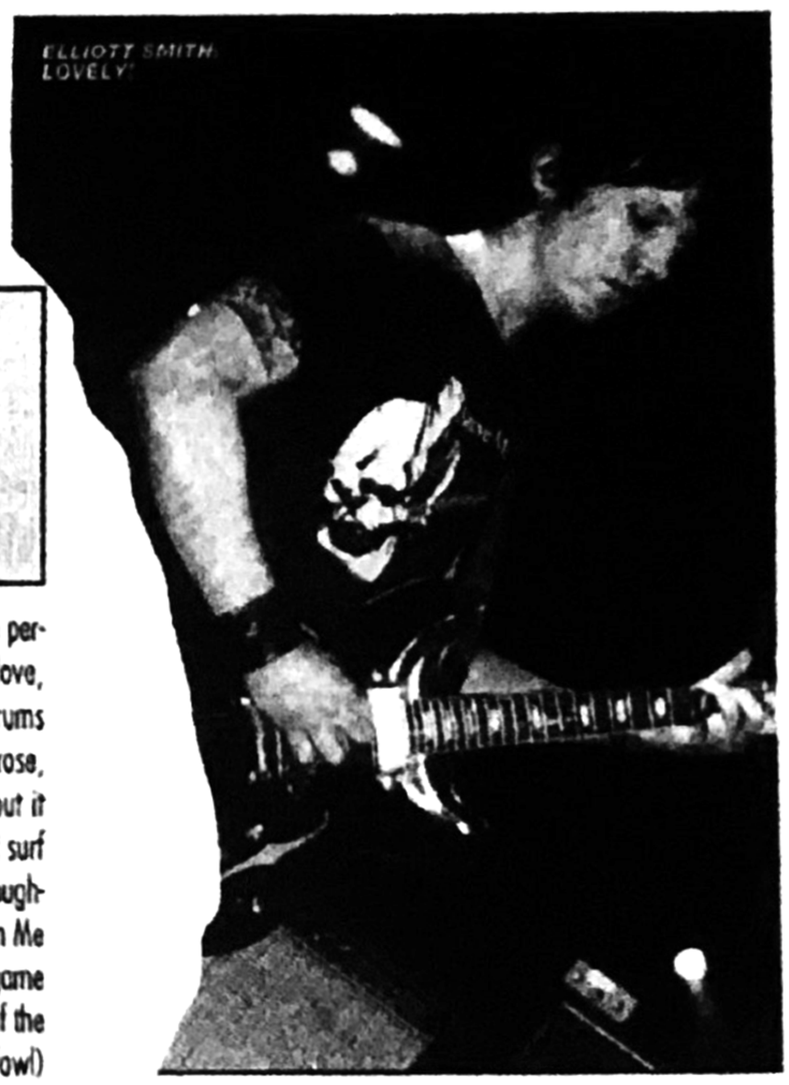
But how can a guy who constantly uses his songs to play out soul-smashing themes like man vs. machine, man vs. woman, and man vs. physiology keep getting up every day? He sounds so matter of fact, throwing his slight frame over his synthesizer as his former spouse rhythmically coaxes him to keep purging his troubled thoughts. He actually sounds happy to have reached such morbid conclusions. Coomes affirms this. "That's one of my happiest times, when I'm playing music. Therapy is the price of a CD or a song on the radio." ■

Reviews

The Perfect Pop Pathos of Quasi

photo and story by Barbara Arnett





Edited by James Oldham

NME Premier Shows

London WC2 Astoria
Tuesday

Lou Barlow is hurling missiles at us. Actually, for missiles, read promotional Sebadoh cigarette lighters with 'Flame' printed on the side. And instead of the verb *'to hurl'*, *let's visualise the most* ineffective, gawky throwing motion you've ever seen.

His elbow is all out of sync, he has little concept of the overarm technique and his sense of direction isn't tremendous. At one stage he decides to target the folks in the balcony – apologising in advance for any collateral damage to the stalls. He misses by maybe 50ft. It's an entertaining, gracious way to end the night. And at the same time, Lou gives us the all-important metaphor to sum up this bill.

Barlow, like our other friends in the show tonight, fits the classic, bad-at-games personality type. He's the anti-jock; proud of his messy posture, squinting through the impractical hairstyle. Who needs self-discipline and an overbearing team spirit when you can be stunned by such an array of premium losers?

Thus we're cheering on the flux of **QUASI**, further proof that the new rock'n'roll might actually be ragtime or barber-shop harmonies. Don't snort; Beck's already in there. And since the Quasi scheme is such a perfect line between class and chaos, you'll get a minuetto (possibly allegretto) with a hardcore attitude, leading to a raw finale which finds Sam Coomes dry-humping the keyboard as Janet Weiss gives it lots of free-jazz syncopation on the drums.

En route, we get 'The Poisoned Well' and 'Our Happiness Is Guaranteed', songs that mix personal thrills with political dialectic, as if the Gang Of Four never went away. The rhythms may be speedy or faltering, often within the same chorus, as if that was how we should expect it. Even when Elliott Smith comes on and the arrangements completely go to hell, the jubilation is mighty.

HEFNER want some of that legendary spirit. When they're not name-checking The Go-Betweens and The Beach Boys, their lyrical bag is overstuffed with grand intentions. Darren Hayman sings about beautiful *gamines* who smoke in his bed – theoretically making him the playboy of the West End world – but there's such a lot of contrivance in there that the plot crashes repeatedly. There's nothing wrong with singing about librarians and impossible love, but when you hook this up to a self-conscious, fey pose, it's a risk. If you try, and subsequently fail, to be cute, you'll just be silly.

So what about **ELLIOTT SMITH** – is there anything studied about his schtick? Apparently not. He waves to the crowd in such a limply genuine manner, smiling and meaning it. He trawls through the still horror that is 'Pictures Of Me', never emphasising the classic lines, allowing the image of the coin-op TV to catch you with its own eloquence.

Elliott is manifestly adored now. Last year's heart-chewingly ace records have been committed to memory. Even the unfamiliar tunes like 'Son Of Sam' and 'Tom's Start' are happily received as the misfit finds his niche. So if we *had* to give him a job on the

QUASI
Featuring "Birds"
(Up CD)

The third time's the charm, and we find ourselves in Quasi's finest moment. The dynamic duo of Sam Coomes (Roxichord organ/guitar/vocals) and Janet Weiss (drums/vocals), with help from such notables as Tony Lash, Larry Crane, Charlie Campbell, Elliott Smith and Chris Slusarenko, have forged the perfect pop album for the perfectly fucked-up. Part of Quasi's beauty rests in their contradictions—songs of lost love, despair, depression and suicide are neatly bound by light skipping rhythms, tingling drums and light-as-a-feather falsetto cooings. The heart breaks as the body bounces. The morose, blackened-heart "The Poisoned Well" has an introductory moment of apt groaning, but it soon gives way to light and lovely bursts of bubble-gum pop. Some delightfully warped surf sounds turn up on "California," but can't quite mask the lyrical self-loathing swelling throughout the two-minute ditty, while swirling *Pet Sounds*-ish psychedelia fills "It's Hard To Turn Me On." "Nothing From Nothing," with its extended intro, is a rapid-fire joyride, while the game show/porn film funk 'n' groove of "I Give Up" is a slice of pure sonic indulgence. One of the most compelling aspects of *Featuring "Birds"* ("Birds" being 80 seconds of screeching fowl) is the increased presence of Weiss's innocent weird-girl vocals, which take over the disturbed dream of "Tomorrow You'll Hide." One of the most frustrating things about this disc is trying to do it justice with mere words. It suffices to say that *Featuring "Birds"* is intelligent, insightful, irreverent, charming, soothing and nothing short of addictive. Buy, you will like.
—*Jane Douglas*

(Up: PO Box 21328 Seattle WA 98111)

REVIEWS

TIME HAS COME TODAY

BY JOHN CHANDLER

Quasi
Featuring "Birds"
(Up CD)

James Taylor once wrote in some stupid-ass song that the secret of life is enjoying the passing of time. Well, James Taylor is a nitwit with a hairline that's going the way of the Dodo. Go ahead and ignore your own mortality, I dare you. Try not to think about the flame of your youth being cruelly extinguished by the breeze stirred up from the ever-accelerating conveyer belt of time. Watch in horror as you become your own parents, and kids on the bus point at you and snicker because your shell no longer courses with the same vitality as theirs.

On the other hand, one who stares into the abyss too long runs the risk of ending up a candidate for the laughing academy, or at the very least, someone who doesn't get invited to parties anymore. This is why idealism and other frivolous world-spinning philosophies that are freely imbibed when the days are long and the night is forever distant inevitably give way to concerns about insurance, mortgages and the awful necessity of spirit-crushing employment.

SEEING LIFE PASS BY, AND FIGURING OUT IF YOU WANT TO DO IT WITH BLINDERS ON OR OFF, is clearly the dominant theme of Featuring "Birds."

This dilemma is one that Quasi's Sam Coomes has been wrestling with since his stint in the San Francisco band the Donner Party a decade ago, though in those days his fascination with life and how to live it played out more like an adolescent and ghoulish fixation on death and decomposition, as demonstrated in his songs "When You're Dead Your Eyes Pop Out," and "Box Full of Bones."

With Quasi, aided and abetted by the colossal drumming and sympathetic vocals of former spouse Janet Weiss, Coomes' ruminations have turned decidedly toward the glum, as he mulls over his own decay. Fortunately, he is also a savvy student of pop music—a lifelong lover of the British Invasion, particularly the Kinks and early Pink Floyd—so even his darkest mutterings come baked in a tasty, if somewhat flaky crust.

Right off the bat, on Quasi's new album *Featuring "Birds,"* Coomes is sounding the alarm of complacency with some keyboard savagery in "Our Happiness Is Guaranteed," a piece of lobotomized optimism about burying your head in the sand in order to achieve peace of mind. "The Happy Prole" is a short but devastating song about work, with lines like "You need the money so you've got to play it dumb/But if you play it long enough, that's just what you'll become." On "Sea Shanty," Coomes watches the days pass like empty boats as his own vessel sails on towards oblivion. "Life is dull/Life is gray/At its best it's just okay/But I'm happy to report/Life is also short," he acknowledges in the unaccountably zippy "California." Time and time again Coomes warns about the ease of getting stuck in a work-day rut, which he sees as a kind of living death; he usually refers to these people as ghosts, while those imposing the work are vampires. An over-simplification, or the unblinking truth?

This might be too much nasty medicine if the music wasn't so consistently engaging. This is easily Quasi's most accessible—even blatantly pop—album. Coomes and Weiss (also of Sleater-Kinney) are utilizing more instruments as well as more recording tape than ever before, like the tumbling barrage of keyboards (including a harpsichord!) that open "I Never Want to See You Again." Coomes turns in a fluid, George Harrison-esque slide guitar solo on "The Happy Prole," while "Tomorrow You'll Hide" features a wonderfully bleak solo vocal turn from Weiss with Coomes arranging a striking piano and guitar duel that starts out creepy and menacing before exhaling into a relaxed state. The transitions are incredibly subtle, like the eerie string passage that subverts the merry little "toot-toots" at the end of "It's Hard to Turn Me On." The harmony vocals are a marvel; check out their wordless wail on "Sea Shanty" that manages to be frightened, mournful and triumphant all at once. The intense intimacy suggested by both their tightly wrapped vocals and their instrumental jousting is reminiscent of Yo La Tengo's Ira Kaplan and Georgia Hubley; the anticipation of the other's next musical move is always exact and effortless.

Seeing life pass by, and figuring out if you want to do it with blinders on or off, is clearly the dominant theme of *Featuring "Birds."* Supposedly with age comes wisdom, but even so, Sam Coomes is wary of this old cliché, as he huffs, "It will pass/It will return/But will I ever learn?" I think he's learned plenty, or he wouldn't be able to casually toss out a line like "You only hurt the one you love/That may be true/But better said/You only hurt the one who loves you." The manic duality of the grim lyrics and the rippling pop tunes reveal the answer to Sam's riddle. It is the pursuit and creation of Quasi's art that continues to supply him with the fuel to move forward, when wallowing in despair looks like a more attractive option all the time.

The only fly in the ointment for Quasi would be if they were to become popular, as addressed in the album closer "Only Success Can Fail Me Now." Though there's little chance that Quasi will crack the Top 40 (A piano and drums duo? Too damned uncompromising for mass consumption), *Featuring "Birds"* is a stunning record. A knockout pop album that looks the reaper square in the eye, it's far more than just "a good local album." This one deserves some serious time in the spotlight and as much intelligent discussion as we can muster. ✪

MORE REVIEWS

Bangs
Tiger Beat
Rock Starr

4/18, Stage 4 Theater in F
John Henry's in Eugene, (

June of
Four Great I
(Quarterly

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS

his instrumental band live, Trans Am
e off like a warm-up band waiting
vocalist who never showed up. If
've overcome that problem on
illance, their third CD. Heavy
rhythms are mixed with

Seattle 4/14)

Kerosen

—

ON BAND 2
QUASi

MARTYN GOODACRE

WE'RE ALL QUASI NOW: (L-R) JANET AND SAM. OR MAYBE NOT SO CRAZY

Sam Coomes is shagging his keyboard. Not caressing it, or asking it for its phone number but – not to put too fine a point on it – humping it, hard. The explanation for such loin-driven histrionics, and the lovely drumkit'n'Hammond voodoo it accompanies? It's just Quasi, the finest band to come out of the USA since the last one. And then some...

Rewind a couple of hours from the band's, um, *exuberant* recent London support slot with Elliott Smith, and it's a somewhat more restrained Sam (vocals, keyboards, guitar) who sits alongside Janet Weiss (vocals, drums) in a Camden beer garden chatting about all things Quasi.

The Portland-based duo have been ploughing their own distinctive, intelligent furrow since 1969, and now they've come up with 'Featuring 'Birds'' – a sublime mishmash of lo-fi squelchiness, sing-song tunes and unadulterated bliss. It's Ben Folds Five *(Are you sure?! – Ed)* meets Pavement minus the geek factor, and it is ace. It's also been a long time coming.

"We were both in bands in San Francisco," reveals Janet. "But we quit to move to Portland to set up a home recording project. We ended up fleshing out the songs and getting a band together."

Ah, Portland, 1969. That'll be Pond, The Spinanes, Hazel, Lots Of Other Bands People Don't Remember...

"It was a great time for music," continues Janet. "I was in Scotland recently, and a guy came up to me and said, 'My favourite band come from Portland – Pond!' I was like, 'That's my sister's boyfriend!'"

More history then. Janet is also the drummer in punk-grrrl rockers Sleater-Kinney, while Sam once played bass with Elliott Smith in their old band, Heatmiser. Links with Smith have been renewed by the duo's current role as Smith's backup band, Smith returning the favour by a spot of guest live guitar for Quasi.

"It's been going on for a year," reveals Sam. "Elliott just started recording more band-oriented songs. It's economical, it's easy for travelling, we all get along..."

"It's a whole other world," says Janet, of their burgeoning live profile. "We did four shows with Beck, but it's on such a large scale. They shuffle us on, they shuffle us off and Beck comes on a hour later. Nope, I don't like those at all..."

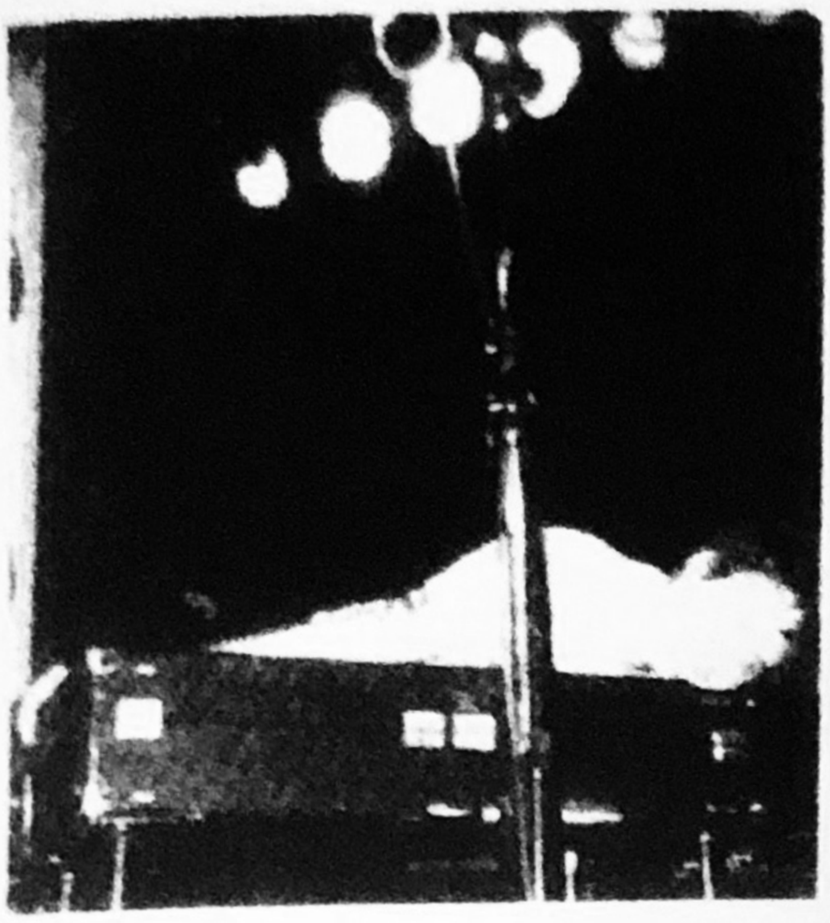
To which *NME* most humbly replies, 'tough knackers'. Potential fame stalks Quasi like a Manics fan, and public acclaim waits in the wings with a November UK support outing with, yes, Elliott Smith. Sam is going to have to get used to seeing countries "out of the window of a moving vehicle". And Janet? Janet is going to have to get used to heights...

"We played Pukkelpop *(in Holland)* last night, and I had this huge drum riser which I *really* don't like. And I think the last thing I said before I went to sleep last night was, 'I don't like risers...'"

Looks like someone's going to have to get over their stage vertigo. 'Cos from here on in, the risers only get bigger.

Mike Goldsmith

'FEATURING 'BIRDS'' IS OUT ON MONDAY ON MATADOR. QUASI ARE TOURING IN NOVEMBER.



the best part of breaking up

A crazily bright album born of both genius and heartbreak, and a union simply too good to deny? This is what came to my mind when listening to *Featuring "Birds,"* the latest (and second post-divorce) collaboration by Sam Coomes and Janet Weiss.

Sure, Weiss is now also known as the drummer of the best band in the world, but those associations seem far away here, even as the livelier tracks hint at a ferocity more apt to be found elsewhere. It's as if the unusual circumstances between her and Coomes take precedence, and he drumming in Quasi becomes both complement and foil.

Coomes' role is more secure, of course, as singer, multi-instrumentalist, and songwriter on all but one of the album's 16 tracks. His lyrics are graphic, literary, lyrical—and presumably directed at her: "You only hurt the one you love/That may be true, but better said/You only hurt the one who loves you," on "The Poisoned Well." Ouch. And then later: "You fucked yourself and you don't know where to go/Split wide open like the sturgeon for the roe." We wait for a full-fledged domestic melodrama, but more often it's just twisted—and maybe therapy for him.

Well, what's a girl to do? Weiss drums harder and harder, but her ex-husband's often cloyingly saccharin melodies leave no room for intervention. He's heavily influenced by a strange prettiness from earlier times, the most forgotten or ignored parts of the Beatles, the Beach Boys, and maybe the Mamas and the Papas; and interspersed among the tunes are manic blasts of his trademark Roxichord. It's like a shield.

But finally, Weiss gets one of her own, "Tomorrow You'll Hide," and if Coomes' knowingly oblique digs are fraught with drama and indulgence, here Weiss is obstinately, dutifully sincere: "Do you miss me?/Will we always be wrong?/Am I just a memory/who plays along?"

A short time after coming off the album's disturbing high, I get the chance to see the band live, and I'm left stunned. They're set up partly facing us, partly each other. But an eyewitness account of the confrontation isn't what we get. The sheer presence of the drums—unlike on the recording where it's compounded by the organ's roughhewn blares—is riveting. What seemed a fairly one-sided assault now becomes, impossibly, a perfect match, and Weiss' unerring beats and endearing grins fall into place easily with Coomes' disheveled genius and theatricality. Merely to watch them is exhausting yet hugely entertaining, as Coomes starts humping and flailing at his instrument, finally attempting a headstand over it and toppling onto the drum kit. Quite punk rock.—*Kok Kian Goh*

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Quasi is an unlikely Northwestern pop duo. The band began in 1992 as Motorgoat, when ex-Donner Party guitarist Sam Coomes started jamming with drummer Janet Weiss. Coomes had played bass with Elliott Smith in Heatmiser. Weiss (also of Sleater-Kinney) played with Smith, too—recently Quasi was joined by the Academy Award nominee for a Kinks tribute show—but she won't play favorites with Coomes or Smith. "I'd really like to see them arm wrestle, though," she laughs.

Quasi plays over-the-top, mostly loud, soulful pop. Weiss' versatile, top-notch drumming is integral, but the duo sounds nothing like Sleater-Kinney. Quasi's odd balance of energetic tunes and downcast lyrics, especially on last year's *R&B Transmogrification*, had writers making a big deal about Coomes' smart-ass, existential bent: obsession with death and the futility of love.

It's too tempting not to mention Weiss and Coomes used to be married—but even better, they still make music together. If Thurston Moore and Kim Gordon get divorced, let's hope they call Quasi for counseling.

"Some people stay friends," Weiss states, "and some people don't."

Was there ever a doubt whether to continue Quasi?

"Yeah, definitely," they answer simultaneously.

"Numerous times," says Coomes.

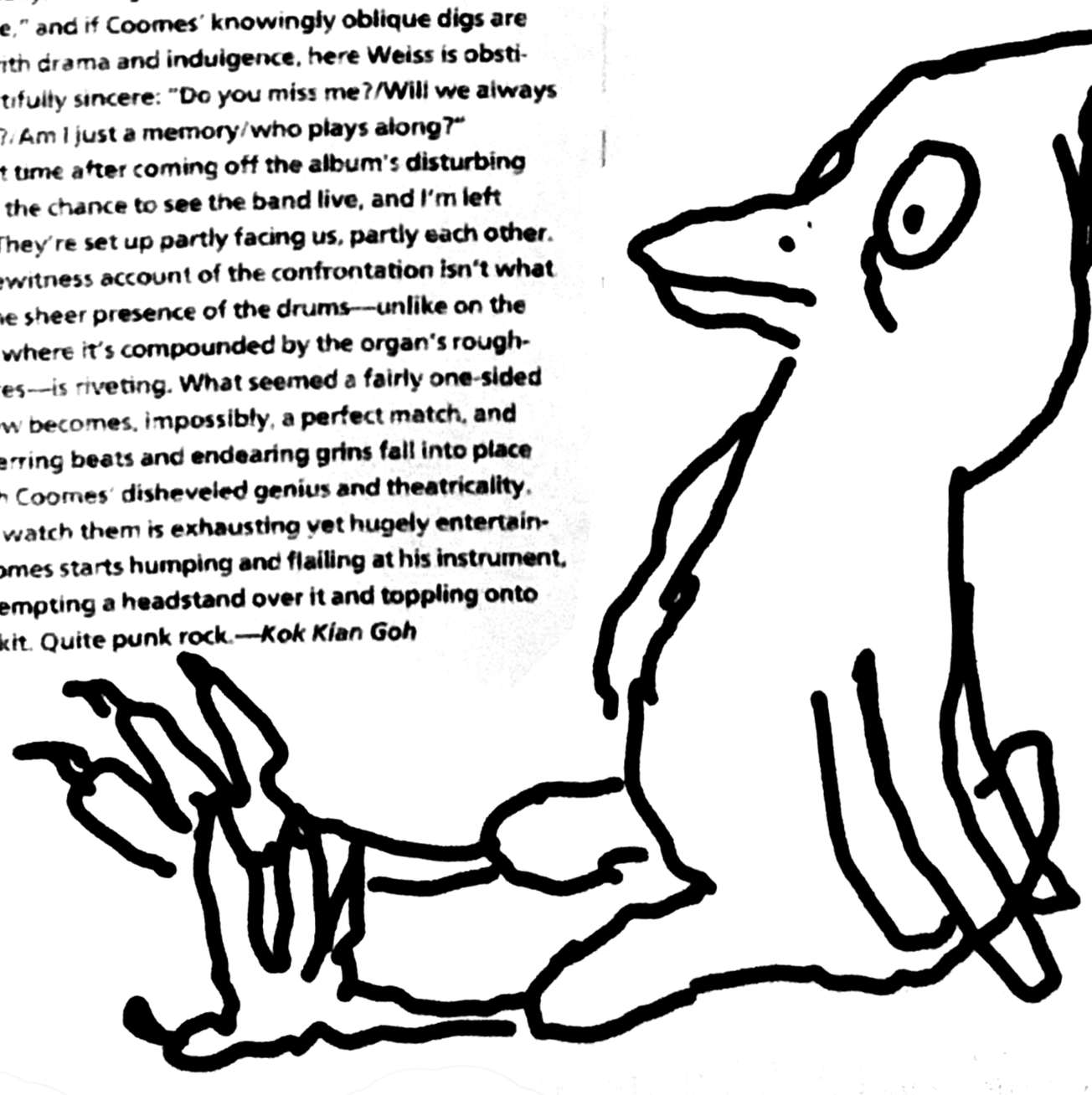
"More than five times," Weiss laughs.

"It forced us to deal with a lot of things," Coomes continues. "The natural tendency in that situation is just to run away and say, 'Fuck it,' and there's a lot to be said for that. If you don't do that it forces you to confront things and adjust to things. There's something to be said for that, too."

Quasi's third album, *Featuring "Birds"* (the title refers to an ambient track of chirping birds), opens with an unaccompanied drumbeat. Coomes' Roxichord (a simulated electronic harpsichord) stumbles into a rollicking barrage over the drums, and the two collide into the first beat of a soaring pop song, "Our Happiness Is Guaranteed," where Coomes sings, "I can't tell the difference between people and machines." With backup vocals by Weiss, "The Happy Prole" is an apt treatise about how jobs suck. Perhaps Coomes, a purveyor of wit who wryly refers to himself as a "culture industry worker," is also obsessed with the work machine.

"I do have qualms about the way that music and the arts have been co-opted by corporate powers," he says. "I was in the mall and they had Crass T-shirts. Crass didn't make those! It seems like resistance is futile. It's hard to come to terms with that if you disagree with corporate capitalism. If you play music, eventually you deal with that, too. I'm no spring chicken. I've been playing for a decade. I'm proud of that, and it wasn't always so easy to stick with it."

—*Cyndi Elliott*



someone comes up to you and tells you they're gonna start playing music because of something *you* did, that's kind of the best thing. To show someone they can do it, too.

I was the same way when I was a kid, I was totally into musicians. I think it's important for girls to see women who are competent at an instrument, playing music to play music, not only to get attention or to make a lot of noise. And who don't necessarily just want to wear a mini-skirt and be lead singer.

What could be the best thing to happen for Quasi?

SAM: Everything's going pretty well right now. I would like to continue to make music: the more people who listen to it, the easier it is to get the resources to continue to make music. So, to keep plugging away, hoping more people will listen to what we're doing and enjoy it...

So you define success as not having to work in the video store?

SAM: That's material success. I've felt pretty happy about every record I've worked on since the Donner Party. I want to make honest music; as long as I can avoid making bullshit then I'm pretty happy with it.

I've been surprised at how some reviews have leaped from lyrical content to imagined real events and feelings between the two of you...

SAM: People often make the mistake of taking lyrics at face value, as if it's sort of like a newspaper article. The most important thing is a song's emotional honesty—and that is not the same thing as factual accuracy.

So it's a mistake to try to reconstruct someone's life from their song lyrics. A song is not like writing an open letter to the public. When I write a song, I have every intention of trying to be honest. But obviously, there are different kinds of honesty.

TOP 20 ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

LAURYN HILL
The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill
(Ruffhouse/Columbia)
Call it *There's Something About Lauryn*. Like a straight-A student and homecoming queen who saves the rain forest on weekends, L Boogie was the first woman ever to preside over hip-hop's fascist congregation. But on *Miseducation*, her pulpit sounds like an awfully lonely place. Betrayed by wannabe pimp daddies who consider spirituality a conspiracy theory and Jay-Z a model of integrity, the Fugee refugee wrote and produced her own world, unbounded by ghettos, suburbs, or broken hearts. **CHARLES AARON**

AIR
Moon Safari
(Source/Caroline)
The soundtrack to a date with a "Sexy Boy" who whisks you off to a fancy restaurant, stares longingly into your eyes, then chatters on endlessly about that rare Astral Sounds *From the Year 2000* record he found at a thrift store for only two dollars!, this French duo's celestial full-length debut glided from the speakers at hipster cafes and fancy shoe stores alike. Catchy, expertly crafted electro-pop as shiny as a silver spacesuit, and as cheeky as a flying video monkey. **SIA MICHEL**

GARBAGE
Version 2.0
(Almo Sounds)
In this album's first song, Shirley Manson calls herself wolf, vampire, demon. Is she boasting or warning you off? Before you decide, ponder this: Manson's as comfortable fantasizing a better future as she is garnishing a Chinese Hynde-style lose-off with a note-perfect Hynde imitation. By turns smart and tuff, compassionate and cynical, *Version 2.0*'s churning, layered cyberpop is a survival manual for the 21st century and the perfect synthesis for today's brainy woman. **JESSE BERRETT**

TORI AMOS
From the Choirgirl Hotel
(Atlantic)
Sarah McLachlan checked herself outta this particular residency ages ago, but here Tori pulls the shades, orders up crazy room service, and lays in for the long haul. The result is claustrophobic art-rock where the encroaching walls blossom into wide-screen Technicolor psychodramas. With a vocal mix that often sounds like you're swinging from her epiglottis, she shucks the feminine in all its forms (male included), making it both quaver and deliver. Her very own *Hounds of Love*, without the dogs. **WILL HERMES**

RUFUS WAINWRIGHT
Rufus Wainwright
(DreamWorks)
A drama queen singing of love's pain? With a piano? And it's not disco? I think I have to go to the dentist—for a month. But, hey, it's nice to get sucker-punched sometimes, and Wainwright's debut is so confident, musical, and swoony-moony beautiful I didn't find the bruise for a week. Some credit Beach Boy vet Van Dyke Parks's merry-go-round string arrangements, some credit genes (huh?), but I think this one has legs because Wainwright is a singer/songwriter, in that order—a rarer animal than you think. **SASHA FREMD-JONES**

ELLIOTT SMITH
XO
(DreamWorks)
He's the eternal wounded college boy, eyes dilating over jukeboxes, cigarette keeping his nubby fingers warm, head groggy with melodies—Beatles, Sebadoh, Nirvana. His screams, "What a fucking joke!" and his declamation point comes out like a semi-colon. *XO* may be Smith's "pop statement" after years as an indie-rock waiter boy, but it's so beguiling because he never loses obligated to get especially meaningful. The truth is in the morass, and his final arrangements say enough to make your weary wince. **CHARLES AARON**

MASSIVE ATTACK
Mezzanine
(Virgin)
Originators of melancholy prog-rock-hip-hop mutations, Massive Attack bring the moody noise and midsixties-tempo beats you'd expect into even darker psychedelic, gently psychotic realms. Cocteau Twin Liz Fraser and pals provide otherworldly vocal drama while folk, greedcore, and a deeper dub than ever enter Massive's haunted whirlpool of sensual sonic fetishism. You can bet that little Goth babies all over the world are being conceived to this masterful murk. **BARRY WALTERS**

BEASTIE BOYS
Hello Nasty
(Grand Royal/Capitol)
While other aging alt-cheeftains bummed us out worrying which train to ride into "the year 2000," the Kings of Boggle had a sublimely stoopid blast with all the possibilities, imagining a funked-up fruitopia in which B-boys, soundgirls, and serial rewindists find common ground in krush-groovin' and Krispy Kreme highs. A grab-bag of cool culture filtered through the inimitable Beastie sensibility, the most schizophrenic record of '98 was also the most user-friendly, down to every last Vocoder growl and Toulouse-Lautrec shoutout. **SIA MICHEL**

PLASTIKMAN
Consumed
(Minus/NovaMute)
Richie Hawtin is the Detroit area's most minimal techno artist, and the best of his four 1998 albums is his most sparse release yet, pursuing a dub perspective dominated by a throbbing, occasionally percolating pulse; think "deep burble." Musically similar to the discreetly oscillating approach of Berlin's Basic Channel/Chain Reaction collective, this isn't a dance floor record. It's less house than "home" music, with leisurely grooves and a restrained 85PM velocity that thumps with the steady, insistent deliberation of a Jarvis-7 heart. **MIKE RUBIN**

FATBOY SLIM
You've Come a Long Way, Baby
(Skint/Astralwerks)
Maybe everyone and their funk soul brother has raveaged all the thrift stores from here to Timbuktu in search of great for their irony mill, but no one has done it with more obvious glee and less apparent irony than Fatboy Slim. With nary a subtlety in earshot, *You've Come a Long Way, Baby* pillers sounds from just about everybody worth robbing, generating the kind of visceral thrills normally reserved for a wrestling match. As the man himself says, "If this don't make your booty move, you're dead." **PETER SHAPIRO**

OUTKAST
Aquemini
(LaFace)
About three songs in, after the bakelite "Return of the G" flips to the rousing "Rosa Parks," you realize *Aquemini* is the best rap album in years, a late-decade Southern answer to *The Low End Theory*-that's as rich, raw, musical, and unpretentiously visionary as anything from Queens or points north. Atlantans Andre and Big Boi smack expertly-ignant player-arms up against sci-fi cosmos, and thunk-shaking 808 under everything—cranking it Southern style for the millennium. **CHRIS MORRIS**

MARILYN MANSON
Mechanical Animals
(Nothing)
Leaving behind a legacy of unbelievable, Reznor-spawned performance art, Marilyn Manson has somehow transformed himself into the only modern-rock superstar worth worshiping or reviling. *Mechanical Animals* is a gloriously preening, bummable noisy glam smack upside the head to uptight hipsters and jaded normals alike. A bare-chested monster, Manson growls actual songs about our alienated society's lack of cultural tolerance (particularly for self-hating celebrities with prosthetic boobs and bad dye jobs). **CHARLES AARON**

HOLE
Celebrity Skin
(DGC)
Sellout album of the year: Noted Hollywood widow with the decade's most powerful set of pipes forgoes diana smells of teen spirit for warm smells of collitas, expounding on makeup and makeovers and girls sold down the river and all the pretty radio boys who she calls friends. She melds "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" with Neil Diamond's "Cherry Cherry," and beauty with a beat her band had trouble locating last time out. Then she drives off to Malibu. **CHUCK EDDY**

R.E.M.
Up
(Warner Bros.)
Jolted by Bill Berry's departure, R.E.M. unmoored itself from rock and reconfigured itself as a three-piece chamber-pop band, drawing on its multi-instrumental grace and knack for lateral thinking. *Up* keeps folding in on itself and out of itself, exposing hints of sonic textures for instants before they recede again, turning its melodies around slowly to examine them from all sides. And Michael Stipe, his voice suddenly bared to the elements, pushes himself to a driven, surprising performance. **DOUGLAS WOLK**

LINKLE
Payence Fiction
(Mo' Wax/London)
Assisted by assorted Radiohead/Verve/Beastie/Metallica buddies, a pair of guys who make their living off other people's records (DJ Shadow and James Lavelle) invent more fun new kinds of pretension than you ever thought possible, somehow managing to imbue their futuristically cinematic-concept-album-about-wearing-headphones with a sense of humor. The loudest parts update the electric slide; the loveliest come from the classical-music aisle; and some of the phattest come from Scott Joplin. **CHUCK EDDY**

LUCINDA WILLIAMS
Car Wheels on a Gravel Road
(Mercury)
You know that frustration when you remember, finally, what your lover's neck smelled like, how long you had to wait in the car for Dad that one time, how much it hurt when your first friend died, but you can't describe it to anyone, not in a language they would understand? Lucinda can, in high-res country-rock songs as simple and inevitable as the rain falling on your car roof. In a few years, you'll have to replace the cds. You'll never find another Lucinda. **SASHA FREMD-JONES**

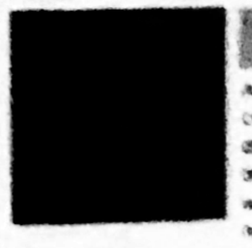
BILLY BRAGG & WILCO
Mermaid Avenue
(Elektra)
What could've been an embalming is instead a boozy séance, conjuring Woody Guthrie's ghost with some lost song lyrics and a crew who employ the mythic talkie as mirror. The apparition rocks, sighs, casts a vote for Jesus, propositions Ingrid Bergman, and generally makes everyone look good, even Natalie Merchant. Like the London audience on Dylan's *Live 1966*, this is proof we sometimes still need Brits to bring out the American in us. **WILL HERMES**

QUASI
Featuring "Birds"
(Up)
Keyboardist Sam Coomes and Sleater-Kinney drummer Janet Weiss, the most hitching ex-couple since the Eurythmics, are unfailingly tuneful and lacerating on the subject of their own marriage's collapse. Coomes's electric harpsichord has a shaun-dignified sound twisted and distorted to its frayed point, and Weiss's splashing beats and sour-sweet harmonies tense it up even more. These are the songs of smart people trying to find some way out of corrosive despair—indie rock's *Rumours*. **DOUGLAS WOLK**

GANG STARR
Moment of Truth
(Noo Trybe/Virgin)
Late-'80s hip-hop nostalgia has produced a glut of creaky comebacks—Jungle Brothers, Big Daddy Kane, EPMD, etc.—but Gang Starr wash all that away with this career-defining, adult-themed manifesto. Guru's warm monotone and slump-shouldered humility bounce to life beside Premier's jaunty, firm-handshake funk. As my friend the twentysomething female indie-rock exec says, "It's all about the main themes of my life—fame, money, respect, no respect, backstabbin', and women giving you back rubs." **CHARLES AARON**

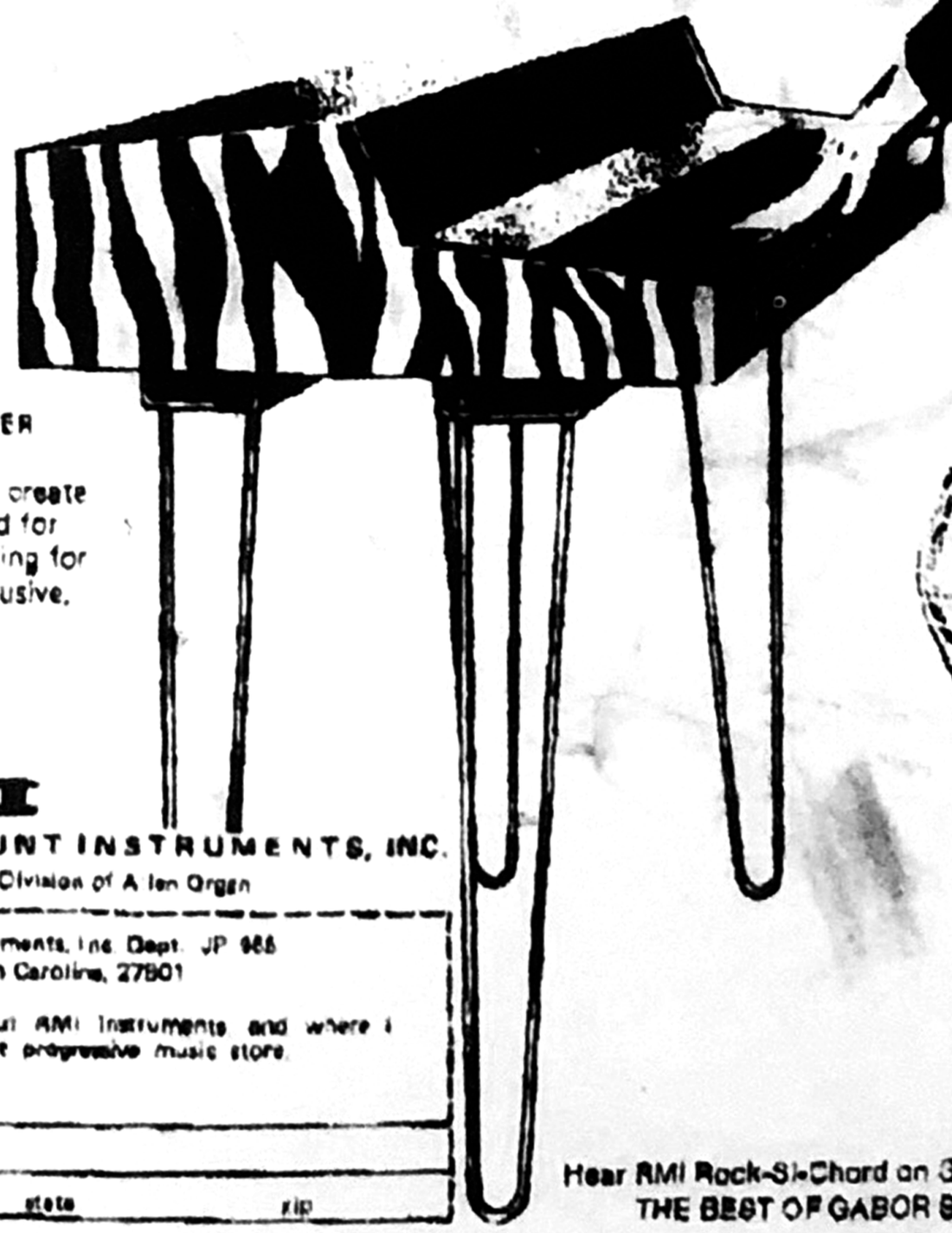
LOCAL H
Pack Up the Cats
(Island)
Stuck in a music world full of inside jokes they just don't get, slicked up by Queen's old producer, bristle small-town-Illinois Nirvanabee power-duo kick ass and take names like a much bigger band, keeping it copacetic by referencing the Who and Beck and "Subterranean Homesick Blues" and Dr. Pangloss from *Candide*. Everything's fine and good, except maybe last night's show, and you won't wear out T-shirts anymore and eventually we'll all outgrow rock'n'roll anyway. But not yet. **CHUCK EDDY**

20 ALBUMS THAT MATTERED IN '98



WHAT'S GABOR SZABO DOING WITH AN RMI ROCK-SI-CHORD ?

He's making with the swinging sound, that's what Fabulous GABOR SZABO made it big on the guitar, but his versatility makes it easy for him to perform on the ROCK-SI-CHORD. The top groups of today are looking for the authentic harpsichord sound, so it was no accident Gabor chose the RMI ROCK-SI-CHORD. It's the only 100% solid state electronic harpsichord, including tone generator, and it has no strings to get out of tune. Model 100 has an 8' tone generator, four octave keyboard, string and lute stops. ROCK-SI-CHORD 200 has separate 8' and 4' tone generators, individual string, cembalo and lute stops for mixing string-to mellow tones. It also has a built-in extra that can make it sound like a piano. Active groups will like the fold-out legs for fast set-ups, and will agree it's the best rock harpsichord around. More and more nationally acclaimed soloists, like Gabor Szabo, and popular groups are performing on RMI instruments. Local combos will be following their lead—they'll be shopping for RMI instruments in progressive music stores all over the country.



MORE BOLD
FRESH IDEAS
IN SOUND
COME FROM RMI

RMI EXPLORER
RMI LARK
RMI 140 AMPLIFIER

RMI could even create an original sound for musicians searching for that elusive exclusive.

RMI
ROCKY MOUNT INSTRUMENTS, INC.
Rocky Mount, N.C./Division of Allen Organ

Rocky Mount Instruments, Inc. Dept. JP 968
Rocky Mount, North Carolina, 27801

Tell me more about RMI instruments and where I can find the nearest progressive music store.

name _____

address _____

city _____ state _____ zip _____

Hear RMI Rock-Si-Chord on GABOR SZABO'S latest album
THE BEST OF GABOR SZABO; Impulse AS-9173

Quasi

Quasi
diy till we die